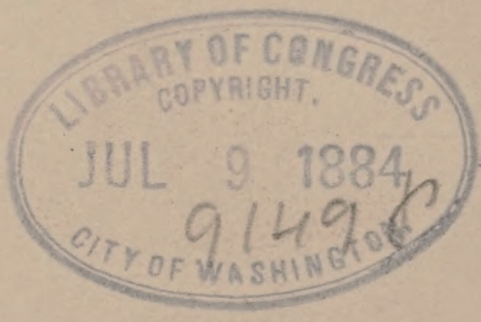
MISS NANCY.

"And what's a butterfly? at best,
He's but a caterpillar drest;"

GAY.

Ida Rahm.



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CONTENTS

CHAPTERS.

I - - - - - - - BERKELEY SPRINGS.

II - - - - MRS. RITTENHOUSE'S BALL.

III - - - - - - CATERPILLAR STREET.

IV - - - - - - - THE ASSEMBLY BOOK.

V - - - - - - THE CHARITY BALL.

VI - - - - - - - - THE BURGLAR.

VII - - - - - - - A SLIP IN THE MUD.

VIII - - - - MRS. CHIVICK PLEADS.

IX - - - - A LITTLE THEATRE PARTY.

X - - - - - AN AFTERNOON WALK.

XI - - - - - "GOOD-BY, MISS NANCY."

XII - - - - RITTENHOUSE TRIUMPHANT.

XIII - - - - - RITTENHOUSE SQUARED.

XIV - - - - - - JACK AS CHAPERON.

XV - - - - - - HER WEDDING DAY.

MISS NANCY.

CHAPTER I.

BERKELEY SPRINGS.

DOWN in the mountains of West Virginia there is an insignificant little village called Berkeley Springs. In summer it is crowded with "guests," as the hotel proprietor politely calls them; from many Eastern cities they flock to these Springs, and lead a lazy, peaceful life, which to most of us is so pleasant. The mountains rising on all sides shut them in from the outer world, so that they form a little colony all to themselves—laughing, flirting and quarreling together in the most harmonious way. But in winter the solitude can scarcely be described; few journeys are taken over the mountain road

to Sir John's run and the world beyond; nothing seems to happen and the monotony of the country life is terrible.

One clear, cold, starlight night in the latter part of December the little village was enjoying its usual tranquility; but if you had entered some of the small frame houses to listen to the homely, simple chat, you would have heard many a regret expressed about Miss Nancy's leaving on the following morning. That was the town topic—how the Jacksons would do without her. "For you know, Miss Smith," remarked one old darkey to another, "Miss Nancy certainly do run dat house. Miss Jackson am pore trash."

"Dat certainly am true, Aunt Sallie," interposed her husband, knocking the ashes from his pipe; "Miss Nancy am a powerful worker, and mighty smart, too."

This was the opinion generally expressed. Mrs. Jackson was a second wife, and, being a quiet, sickly woman, not of much authority in the village. Aunt Sallie, the cook and a leading

sister in the Methodist church, felt qualified to publish her opinions on all topics, private and public.

Captain Jackson's house stood opposite the hotel, or, to speak more correctly, the grove. Time had dealt kindly with the old homestead, for though he had eaten off all signs of paint and had obliged the second-story piazza to be propped up with long poles, still he left the grand, gracious old trees to cover up all defects while the summer lasted, and when winter made the trees bare and leafless no prying stranger was left to spy out "the nakedness of the land."

Light streamed from the large dining-room windows, innocent of curtains or shutters, and cheered several humble villagers staggering home from some friendly gathering. Within all was cheerful and bright. The room was large, with little furniture save the necessary table in the middle, chairs and a book-case, while half-a-dozen family portraits smiled or frowned down in unbroken silence; but a big wood-fire, glowing and

crackling on the old-fashioned hearth, lent an air of comfort to the forlorn surroundings.

Captain Jackson, wrapped in a faded dressing-gown, was sitting in an arm-chair beside the fire, peacefully smoking and enjoying the heat, now and then caressing the ears of a pointer stretched full length by the welcome blaze. A much more active scene was going on in another part of the room. Miss Nancy was trying to lock a very full trunk, while little Ken and wee Virgie were doing their best to help. Just then came the clatter of little wooden soles outside in the hall, and a boy of about nine burst in the room, almost hidden by a pile of white skirts.

"Nancy," he exclaimed, "you've forgot your petticoats!"

A little frown of anxiety came on the girl's smooth, white forehead as she said: "Oh, Jack! how can I put them in? the trunk's too full now."

"Wear 'em," proposed Jack, laconically; but as this suggestion met with no encouragement he helped lift out the tray, put the dainty skirts in,

then try again to lock it. The trunk, probably feeling this to be an imposition on its good nature, refused to close, so out came the heavy tray once more. Before Nancy knew what was done Jack had jumped in and stamped them down. Indignation so strengthened her that she easily hauled him out. "You've got them all dirty, you horrid boy!"

"I was trying to help you," returned Jack, wrathfully, feeling that his intentions at least were good.

Nancy soon pacified him as she alone could, and at last, with great difficulty, the troublesome trunk was locked and strapped. Then Jack fastened on a little tag with the full address:—

Miss Nancy Jackson,
Care of Mr. Morris L. Shew,
1824 Walnut Street,
Philada., Pa.

This mighty task over they gathered round the fire, Nancy on a little cricket, Virgie on her lap, Ken and sturdy, red-headed, devoted Jack

close by. He was her own and only brother, dearer than anything else in the world; and through all Jack's obstinacy, his mischief, his boyish badness even, there shone that one ray of pure good—the love he bore his sister. Still the children of the second Mrs. Jackson were very dear to Nancy, and though she was barely nineteen she exercised almost unlimited authority over them.

"Just think, children," said she, gravely, wishing to work on their feelings; "I will be way off in Philadelphia to-morrow night."

"And you're a mighty lucky girl to go, too," remarked Jack. "Wish I was in your place, just to have a good time all winter."

"Yes, you'll go to ve pheatre and parties and phe circus every day, and we won't do nuffin," said little Ken, which sorrowful picture so worked on Virgie's feelings that she began to cry. "Oh, Nancy, take me—I want to go, too?" she wailed. "And me," sobbed Ken.

"I wish, Nancy, you would not say such things

to the children. It's very thoughtless, when you know how it affects your poor mother," said her father, in his weak, querulous way.

Nancy had not intended to reduce them to tears, so she coaxed and petted till the smiles returned—then she carried them off for the night. In their little white gowns they knelt to say their simple childish prayers before scampering off to bed. As they lay there so rosy and sweet, the tears came to Nancy's eyes at the thought of how many months would pass before she heard those prayers again. Jack diverted these mournful thoughts, and they had a lively tussle before he was subdued. Mrs. Jackson's room could not be entered, as she had one of her neuralgic headaches, and it had been found best to prescribe perfect quiet as her only medicine.

Clear and crisp was the air next morning; the snow lay deep on the road and up the mountain side, which rose abruptly in front of the village. The sleigh-bells tinkled as the impatient horses pawed the ground. "Hurry up, Nancy! the

horses hate to stand," called her father, impatiently.

Poor Nancy was loath to go; the children clung to her and several villagers had come to say good-bye. Fat Aunt Sallie stood, dipper in one hand, while with the other she wiped the tears from her shiny face. Mrs. Jackson appeared at an upper window, the greater part of her head still obscured by a tight bandage.

"Good-bye, Ken and Virgie—Oh, Jack! be a good boy"—the tears coming into her voice. "Good-bye, good-bye!" and jumping into the sleigh they drove off.

"De Lord bless you, Miss Nancy," shouted Aunt Sallie's sweet, soft voice, "and bring you home safe!" With this blessing ringing in their ears, they glided swiftly round the curve that hid them from view. Soon their speed slackened as they began to ascend the mountain. On her left Nancy could look down in the grove of the hotel, which gradually sank lower and lower. Toiling painfully up the snowy incline she saw a

small, familiar figure. "Wait a minute, Dad," she said, and soon Jack emerged on the road, panting and almost worn out.

"You blessed boy!" exclaimed Nancy, tenderly lifting him in the sleigh.

Soon they reach the station; soon—ah, far too soon. Nancy's train comes and goes, leaving her father and little Jack straining their eyes to catch the last glimpse of her fluttering handkerchief.

To a person of Nancy's buoyant, excitable temperament railroad traveling is delightful. She pictures to herself the pleasures in store for her in Philadelphia; she thinks of her dear old home; wonders if she will come back the same; then reads a little, studies her fellow passengers, returns again to her fancies, and when the train stops at the Relay she is astonished to find it is five o'clock. Here she changes cars, and a few minutes later the train makes a brief stop at the Union Station in Baltimore. Nancy thrusts her head out the open window, and looks up and down the long, narrow depot, curiously watching

the people as they hurry to and fro. Suddenly she catches sight of a tall man striding towards her. She smiles and bows as he gets into the car, and in a moment more he is sitting beside her.

"Why, Mr. Latrobe!" she says, her cheeks scarlet, as the train moves on. "I am so surprised to see you! How did you know I was here?"

He laughed, then said in his soft Southern way: "Edith Shew wrote Berne you were coming to-day, so I took advantage of the information, and here I am. Do you mind?"

"Mind! why I'm so charmed I don't know what to say," in a purposely elegant manner.

"Now, Miss Nancy, please don't," he pleaded, earnestly, though his eyes twinkled.

"Don't what?" asked Nancy, in a most innocent tone.

"Don't be affected; next June I will be fully prepared for it, but now it's too great a shock."

"It suddenly struck me," began Nancy, slowly, as if thinking deeply.

"What? my hat? I beg ten thousand pardons;" removing it as far away as possible. They both laughed, but Nancy continued, soberly: "Suppose after all they shouldn't like me; here I am looking forward to being something wonderful in Philadelphia society; now suppose they find me stupid and I become a wall flower; wouldn't it be a good joke on me?"

"I'll make them like you," returned he, energetically, "if needs be, at the point of the bayonet?"

"But, seriously, Mr. Latrobe," said she, "do you think they will like me?'

"Oh, I see what you want! A dose of most wholesale flattery, Miss Jackson," with an elaborate wave of the hand. "I am convinced that all Philadelphia will be at your feet ten minutes—no! five—after you arrive. Charms such as yours——." Here she interrupted him, "Edith wrote me you were going West; is it true?"

"Too true," he sighed. "It's a shame, for I'll be away over a month; but after that you may

expect to see me regularly every Sunday. Oh, here's a good idea! a little rough on the other men, but a 'snap' for me—won't you let me make an engagement for all the Sunday walks from the middle of February until June!"

"No," she returned, with a roguish look in her gray eyes; "it's my duty to allow the 'other men' some chance."

"Now," he said, "I won't be there for either the Assemblies, but there's the Charity Ball; if you'll give me four dances I'll come over for it—promise?"

"Yes," she answered, "I promise." Just then the conductor shouted the name of "Perryman's!"

"Gracious!" exclaimed Latrobe, "this is as far as I can go. Good-bye!" and hastily shaking hands he was gone.

About 8.30 Nancy arrived in Philadelphia, and soon was in Miss Shew's luxurious little boudoir toasting her feet before the miniature coal grate, talking and laughing with Edith.

But at home, in the cold, bleak summer-house, Jack was kneeling, his face buried in his hands, and crying, "Nancy! oh, Nancy! I want you!" We are so apt to forget how much those suffer who are left behind. Jack felt a cold nose against his cheek, and turning, he saw the dog had followed him there. He threw his arms around Nix's neck and sobbed—yes, he who despised tears—and when he slept that night, in his narrow cot-bed, his pillow was wet and Nix was nestled close to him

CHAPTER II.

MRS. RITTENHOUSE'S BALL.

MRS. B. FRANKLIN RITTENHOUSE had issued some eight hundred cards for a "small dance" on the 4th of January, and very grand preparations had been made for the occasion. Outside, an awning and two policemen distinctly announced that something was going on, while the many carriages depositing their lovely burdens and then hurrying off to give place to others made the announcement even more plainly. The vast parlors were a blaze of light and a bower of flowers, resounding with the gay music that sent the élite of Philadelphia society dancing on the polished floors. Mrs. Rittenhouse intended this to be *the* event of the season, and certainly she had done all within the power of money to make it so. She stood, serene

and stately, clad in heavy crimson velvet, at the door of the first drawing-room, receiving her guests. Her daughter, standing near, dressed in dainty white tulle, cut low—yes, *very* low—round her thin neck, looked paler and more freckled than usual. This ball was given to Maude—given to celebrate her fifth winter in society. In fact, Mrs. Rittenhouse was making a great effort for Maude, and it would be very strange if she failed. Mrs. Rittenhouse was not in the habit of failing in what she undertook. Maude had only one bouquet, bought out of her own pocket-money. The family were beginning to think it no joke supplying twenty-dollar bouquets, so this year they had rebelled. Maude was getting tired and cross. She never enjoyed herself half so well anywhere as at her own parties. All the girls were having a good time, the ball was at its height, and still she was chained to her mother's side. Presently Mrs. Rittenhouse introduced to her a young man in irreproachable dress suit and immaculate shirt-front.

"Ah, what a brilliant scene!" remarked he, with happy inspiration.

"Yes," very languidly, "the rooms are rather pretty."

"Have you been out much, Miss Rittenhouse?" said he, bent on doing his duty. To his surprise, Miss Rittenhouse looked angry. She thought it was a reference to her five winters.

"Yes," stiffly; and then there was no more conversation. Suddenly her face brightened—a tall, handsome girl was entering the room, escorted by a sallow-looking young gentleman, and just behind them a pretty stranger.

"So kind of you, dear Mrs. Rittenhouse, to let me bring my friend. Miss Jackson—Mrs. Rittenhouse," said Edith Shew's gay voice.

"Ah, Maude, dear! My friend Miss Jackson!" Maude scarcely nodded, being far more intent on their youthful escort; and then in a moment's time Edith had waltzed off with the young man in irreproachable costume, while Maude immediately followed, happy in the possession of her

sallow beloved. Thus Nancy was left, solitary and alone, standing beside her hostess. Perhaps ten minutes passed—ten minutes! they seemed as many days to poor, strange Nancy. Would they never end? Oh, if she had only refused to come! and so her bitter thoughts were running on when the clear, cold voice of Mrs. Rittenhouse fell on her ear.

"Miss Jackson—Mr. Pyne. Take Miss Jackson to the conservatory and show her the ferns!"

There was no resisting this command, so a very sulky-looking young man led off bewildered Miss Jackson. They wandered through the magnificent rooms in almost unbroken silence. Mr. Pyne was angry and he would not talk—thinking, most naturally, that he was "stuck," with this evidently unacquainted girl, for the evening. Nancy soon recovered her self-possession, and with it her gay spirits.

"It's just beautiful!" she said, looking up sweetly at her cross partner. As no direct question was asked, Mr. Pyne felt justified in giving

no answer. He was very young and very mad. "I'm from the country, you know, and we don't have balls there," still bent on subduing him. This time Mr. Pyne suffered a well-bred "Ah!" to escape him. Nancy would not give up.

"Are you fond of shooting?" she inquired.

"Yes, moderately so," beginning to come round a little.

"I am sure you are a great fisherman."

"Why?" in a surprised tone.

"Because you are so very fond of quiet."

His anger all vanished in a hearty laugh.

"You're a tease, I can see," he returned; "but, all the same, I do like fishing; it's such cool work in summer."

"Lazy! lazy!" she cried, shaking her finger at him.

"Nancy! Miss Jackson!" called Edith, "may I present Mr. Spruce?" Mr. Pyne bent over her: "Let me take you to supper?"

"Yes," she smiled, well pleased at her conquest.

From this time Edith did her duty, nobly atoning for her early neglect. Man after man was brought up, and Nancy became quite the attraction of the evening. She could not be called beautiful, but there was a certain winsome freshness about her face which, combined with a pretty-rounded figure and a sweet Southern voice, gave her a certain fascination impossible to describe, and yet which exerted its charm over men and women alike. But her eyes—deep, soft eyes of gray—darkened by heavy curving lashes, made one instinctively exclaim at their loveliness, and therein lay her chief, perhaps only, beauty.

Dance after dance had to be divided, and when lucky Mr. Pyne bore her off triumphantly to supper, several envious looks were bestowed on him by the rejected applicants for that favor.

He put Nancy on the third step, which was, of course, not so popular as higher up the stairway, being further from the viands—*and* the gentlemen; but owing to the crush it was the best they could do. Presently Edith came up, her face

radiant. "Nancy," she whispered, "who do you think has asked to be presented to you?"

"Who?" asked Nancy, deeply interested.

"Rahl Rittenhouse!"

Nancy looked puzzled; being a stranger, she did not understand the honor about to be conferred. Edith laughed.

"Mr. Pyne," she said, "just think! Miss Jackson doesn't know who Rahl Rittenhouse is!" He smiled as he gave Nancy a plentiful supply of terrapin and chicken-salad.

"Who is he?" demanded the interested party, naturally curious.

"Well," returned Mr. Pyne, spreading a napkin over her white dress, "he is president, cabinet and congress all rolled in one on social matters; he is the dog that watches the Assembly Book; in short, the glory, pride and prop of Philadelphia society."

"My gracious!" exclaimed Nancy, "I know I'll hate him."

"Hush! here he comes."

No wonder he was admired, for he was very goodly to look upon. Of medium height, compactly built, and a man, every inch of him, from the crown of his brown head to the soles of his pointed shoes. Perhaps a slightly complaisant and a rather supercilious air somewhat impaired the expression of his otherwise handsome face; but such small defects are easily forgiven in a Rittenhouse. A moment more and the introduction was effected. Then a novel difficulty presented itself to Miss Jackson,—she could think of nothing sufficiently bright to say to this great man. Wildly she looked around for assistance, and, in her confusion, almost upset her plate. He caught it dexterously. "I see our friendship bids fair to be platonic!" and smiling at his own joke, he seated himself just below her.

"I'm so glad," she said. "You are so tall you frightened me."

The social lion deigned to smile kindly on her feeble attempt.

"What good suppers they have here!" getting back her courage.

He laughed outright.

"Do you like terrapin?" he asked. "Happy terrapin!"

"You are making fun of me!" she exclaimed, indignantly.

"Oh! no, I'm not; but that speech was so naïve!"

"Well," she said, demurely, "I'm only a country girl, and that's their rôle, isn't it?"

Rahl did not reply; he was beginning to feel he had made a mistake in asking to be introduced to this little fool, and he resolved to escape as soon as her partner came back from his bottle of champaign.

"How tired those girls seem," remarked Nancy, glancing at some maidens languidly toying with their spoons.

"They are not tired," he explained; "they're bored—we all are—I am, too."

"Oh, thanks!" she returned, with considerable asperity. "So glad I have a soothing effect on you."

"It is not your fault; it's the life we lead. Everything—every night—is just the same; we meet the same people, to say the same things, and it's tiresome. A stranger's face is a relief, as yours has been to us all, this evening."

"Well, but why don't you always meet new people?" she demanded.

"Because we know every one in our own set, and we don't care to meet any one out of it."

"And how long have you been doing this—just seeing the same people all the time?"

"Oh, ten or twelve years."

"Goodness!" exclaimed the shocked Miss Jackson; "I don't see how you stand it."

"Well, that's the reason we are bored, don't you see?" more interest coming into his face as he watched every expression of the girl's beautiful eyes.

"I should go crazy if I had to be with the same people a year, or even a month."

He smiled at the extravagant statement.

"What will you do when you are married? That means, perhaps, fifty years with one person."

A slight flush came to her face.

"Well, that would be different," she said, hesitatingly.

"Why different?" bent on making the gray eyes look at him.

"Because," in a slightly belligerent tone, "I should love him."

"Bah!" he answered, trying to lead her on; "you don't believe in love, do you?"

"Yes, I do"—she looked squarely at him now—"and it would be much better for you if you believed in it, too. If you were truly in love with some girl you wouldn't think of being bored."

"The very idea bores me," he began, in a teasing way.

Nancy was indignant; he had been laughing at her all the time.

"I wonder what has become of Mr. Pyne?" she said, with an entire change of manner.

"Probably too much champy," returned Rahl, who now wanted to talk with her a little longer.

"He has a very weak head, and I saw several men imbibing pretty freely as I came to meet you. Don't you like to sit here?"

"I'm not going to talk to you any more," she said, getting up. "I'm going to find Edith."

"You can't go alone," rising and offering his arm.

"I don't see why I can't go alone. I do just as I please at Berkeley."

"This isn't Berkeley, and it's bad form here," he announced, as if settling the question.

"And I think it's bad form to say you are bored when I am trying to entertain you."

"Won't you please forgive that speech?" he asked, pleadingly.

"No," she answered, quite seriously; "I will forgive neither the speech nor you for making it, but I'll consider the case at my leisure, and I may be induced to *forget* both. Oh, there's Mr. Pyne! You see he is misjudged; it was hunger kept him from me, not champagne."

"*J'en doute*," quoth Rahl, in a low voice; "I

don't suppose I'll be fortunate enough to see you again this evening; but will you walk with me to-morrow afternoon? I am going on Miss Shew's theatre party Saturday night, and she says I may take you. I tell you this to prepare you for the number of times you may be forced to endure me, and then I ask again will you voluntarily go to walk with me to-morrow."

"Yes," she returned," if you will promise to fight?"

He laughed. "Well, then the battle will begin at four precisely."

After Mr. Rittenhouse's grave insinuations, Nancy could not help but feel some slight misgiving as to Mr. Pyne's sobriety, when that smiling gentleman appeared with a glass of wine.

"I have brought you something that will keep the roses blooming, Miss Jackson," he said, gracefully complimenting her brilliant cheeks.

"Your expedient cannot be a successful one," she retorted, gaily; "for I hear you have given it a trial, and see how yours have faded." This

covert allusion passing unchallenged, proved to Nancy's mind that Mr. Pyne was too sensible a fellow to enter a contest where his vulnerable point had been discovered.

"Tell me, Mr. Pyne," she asked, as they returned to the dancing room, "who was that lively lady sitting on the stairs just above me—the one who received such a great deal of attention? Why, do you know she had six or seven men talking to her nearly all the time!"

"I guess you mean Mrs. DeLancey Bruce."

"Married!" exclaimed Nancy, with the most innocent astonishment in her gray eyes.

Mr. Pyne laughed; her surprise was amusing.

"Well, a sort of widow, you know—warranted article—stamped with the old proprietor's name. See?"

Nancy did not "see," but she had to be contented with this explanation, for the dancing had recommenced; and, with the stimulation of a very excellent supper and a good deal of champagne, it continued till the smallest hours of

the morning. It was Rahl Rittenhouse himself who risked his precious health, by rushing from the heated rooms, to put them in their carriage when, at last, they succeeded in tearing themselves away; and it was Rahl Rittenhouse's haughty voice that condescended to remind Miss Jackson of the morrow's engagement.

"Oh, Nancy! what a success you've been," sighed the delighted Edith, unconsciously acknowledging that she had doubted such a result. Something was weighing on Edith's mind—something which might be termed the oppression of an unpleasant duty that must be performed. There was no shirking it, or all the kind plans for Nancy's pleasure during her absence in the South would be frustrated. She must explain the humiliating fact that between her Aunt's—Miss Hannah Green's—friends, residing on Caterpillar street, and the people they had just met in Mrs. Rittenhouse's Walnut street mansion, there stood an impassable barrier, erected by social prejudice, strengthened by uncongeniality, and of which

the outward and visible sign was Market street. Edith had determined that no one should know of her friend's intended visit to this aunt until Nancy's pretty face and charm of manner had made for her friends brave enough to break through any amount of barriers and prejudices for the sake of seeing her. She must explain all of this, or Nancy would spoil everything by giving her address before the proper time. Edith shuddered as she pictured the well-bred horror with which Mrs. Rittenhouse's aristocratic nephew would receive the intelligence that he had actually been attentive to a girl who expected to visit Caterpillar street. There was no use procrastinating, so Edith, with the uncomfortable feeling that she was about to trample ruthlessly on the pride of a sensitive nature, started in bravely and ended triumphantly. Poor Nancy was convinced that Caterpillar street meant social death. The belief cost a great deal, but, like merchandise paid for, it was hers to keep. A large amount of pride went into the bargain, also the good

opinion she had formed of the acquaintances made during the evening. They were a narrow-minded people, she thought, but, withal, kind and agreeable. She quite agreed with Edith, that it would be wise to make some firm friends who would add to her pleasure while the Shews were in Florida.

Even after the lucid explanation given her, Nancy could not fully comprehend how the whole northern region of a city, confessedly more beautiful than any other portion, could be so banned. Certainly there must be many cultivated people living there, in spite of Edith's assurance to the contrary.

Nancy thought a good deal about the barrier and Caterpillar street, and, perhaps, a little about Rahl Rittenhouse, as she tossed, sleeplessly, on the small brass bedstead. Gradually there came a transformation, horrible to relate. She—Nancy Jackson—is turning into a caterpillar, a handsome, red-and-black, furry one, but so unhappy, dragging out her miserable existence near

the curbstone—too proud to crawl around with her own kind, only longing to mingle with the throng of fine people that pass her to and fro. Presently her heart—for even caterpillars have hearts—begins to beat. A tall, fashionable gentleman is coming towards her, airily swinging his silver-topped cane. Certainly she has seen that haughty face somewhere;—why, of course, it is Rahl Rittenhouse. The sun on his polished boots dazzles her eyes, and before she can crawl beyond his reach he has noticed her, and, with a smile of contemptuous pity, raises his foot and coolly tramples her to death. Nancy woke with a gasp, to find the bright light of glorious midday shining in her eyes. She smiled as a ray of sunlight from the crystal mirror flashed across her bed. Rahl's boots had shone much the same way in her dream. That dream made little impression on her at the time, but later, when the foreshadowed events did happen, she remembered all its smallest details.

The memory of Edith's revelation was still so

fresh that pride and policy must needs have another contest in Miss Nancy's mind as she started out on the promised walk in the afternoon with Rahl Rittenhouse. Perhaps it was the echo of that battle which made her speeches so sharp with wit or keen with sarcasm. Pride was not dead though policy had gained another victory, and Nancy ended once more by agreeing with Edith, that to make friends was best. No, indeed, pride was not dead, for it carried her head very high and caused her manner, at times, to be extremely haughty; yet policy's superior strength made her withal so winningly sweet and gracious that the blasé man at her side was wholly fascinated by her versatility. The knowledge that she was interesting Rahl Rittenhouse, the great social connoisseur, whose voice, unless she could charm it into silence, would be the first to cry out against her, and the fact that he in turn was doing his best to be agreeable, gave Nancy a grim sort of pleasure. "If I can only make this man like me," she thought, "he will do a great

deal towards breaking up the monotony of Caterpillar street; for if people there are so uncongenial I shan't have any friends at all."

"It is a pity you are going away before the Assembly, Miss Jackson," Mr. Rittenhouse said, as they walked homewards. It would give me so much pleasure to send you the Book."

Nancy's heart gave a bound; here was just the chance she most longed for.

"That is exceedingly kind of you," she made answer, in as careless a tone as she could command; "and since it would really give you pleasure to get me an invitation I can afford you the opportunity, for after the Shew's leave for Florida I expect to visit my aunt."

"How delightful!" he exclaimed, honestly pleased that this charming study was to remain within his reach. "And how long will you be with Miss Shew?" he asked, as they stood on the steps.

"Until Monday morning; you may come Sunday, to say good-bye. This, you know, is only

au revoir; you haven't forgotten, have you? that you fall to my share at the theatre party, to-morrow night?"

"Forgotten it? How could I? But we will never say good-bye, Miss Jackson—always *au revoir,*—unless, of course, by your will and command."

The door had been opened, and as Nancy held out her hand, a little thrill of pleasure shot through her at her successful subjugation of this celebrated lion. He took the hand, pressed it gently, while he looked smilingly down in the bright eyes, raised his hat and was gone.

Edith had told her that Rahl never frequented "Teas," so, it must be confessed, Nancy's interest in that species of entertainment was very slight indeed; nevertheless, being one among fifteen "buds," invited to receive that afternoon with the Misses Nopkins, she contrived to enjoy herself remarkably well. Mr. Pyne was present; this being his "coming out" winter, he considered it wise to accept every invitation and to be polite to

everybody. Being very susceptible, Nancy had made a great impression on his waxen heart. He held her fan, paid her glaring compliments, and, during the dance afterwards, claimed a waltz every time poor Nancy stopped for breath. The irrepressible Mr. Spruce, seated in a perilous position on the spiral end of the banisters, clutched her arm as they passed him, to remark, "that some one was pining for her." Nancy resented the freedom taken with her arm, until Mr. Pyne assured her no one ever took offence at Syd. Spruce.

"You know," continued Tommy, confidentially, "he's a splendid fellow at a small party; keeps things going, though he is too 'fresh.' He's always asked to dinners, too; for people must have some one to make them laugh. It helps digestion, and a host would as soon think of leaving out oysters on the half-shell."

At this juncture Spruce's merry black eyes and red face thrust themselves between Nancy's shoulder and her companion's.

"Talking about me, Pynney, boy? That's all right; but allow me to reply, and don't tell her any lie, or you know very well, you will be bound to go to ——. Now, Miss Jackson, come and dance with the poet." But here Edith insisted it was time to go home. Spruce sighed, pathetically, "Adieu, then, till to-morrow, removes from me this sorrow, and I see you again, for I'm coming, sunshine or rain."

The next day was spent in a darkened room; for so much gayety had given our heroine a splitting headache. At night her eyes were all the brighter for their rest, and her pleasure in the opera brought a bright color to her cheeks. Unlike most of the party, she followed the scene before her closely, drinking in every tone of Patti's voice. Then, as the last note of the grand *aria* died away, to be followed by a storm of applause from the vast multitude, Nancy, carried away by excitement, impulsively seized the gorgeous bouquet by her side and flung it at the diva's feet. It was only as she saw them borne

off amid many other flowers that she realized that she had prized them too much to lose them, and Rahl bit his lip in vexation at this wanton waste of his twenty-five dollars. Perhaps that was his reason for being less devoted to Nancy during the supper that followed the opera, and for making his neglected cousin Maude the delighted recipient of many little attentions to which she was by no means accustomed.

"Never mind," soliloquized Nancy, as she settled herself to sleep that night; "it was only jealousy; and I will be real nice to him to-morrow."

CHAPTER III.

CATERPILLAR STREET.

ON Sunday evening Rahl presented himself in the Shew's drawing-room, at eight o'clock precisely. He was not in the habit of calling so early—in fact, seldom called at all; but somehow this girl interested him and he wanted to talk with her as much as possible. She did not always please him; she was too out-spoken—too candid, very often, but not in a disagreeable way, for the softness of her voice, together with her pretty accent, robbed such speeches of their *brusquerie*. To-night she was quiet and subdued, very different from the day before.

"Do you feel tired?" he asked, pulling his easy chair as near hers as permissible.

"Yes," she returned; "I have been up too late

since I've been here, and I'm not accustomed to it; besides, I'm low-spirited."

"What makes you? are you homesick?"

"Yes," she answered, her lips quivering; "I'm homesick for Jack and Aunt Sallie—and all of them. I have a good mind to pawn my clothes for a return ticket."

"Who is Jack?" demanded Rahl, in an interested tone.

All her blues suddenly vanished, for here was a chance to tease.

"Jack?—oh!" in a very coy manner, playing with her fringe. "I don't know how to explain."

"And you like him—this Jack?" asked Rahl, who, by-the-way, would have made a good interviewer.

"Like him? I love him!" with energy.

"And you, with your fine ideas of love and honor, think it is a nice thing to come here and make other men interested in you?"

"Who is interested in me, pray?" demanded Nancy, wickedly.

Mr. Rittenhouse was rather at a loss; but a bright idea struck him.

"Why, there's that young Pyne; any one can see he is just wild about you. What will he say when he hears of Jack?"

"Well," replied she, thinking the joke had gone far enough, "he will say that Jack is my brother, and I ought to love him. Now, confess, I did fool you! Who's that in the hall? Oh, good-evening, Mr. Spruce—so glad to see you! Edith, here is Mr. Spruce."

Then conversation became general, while each man tried to outsit the others. Finally, eleven struck, and Nancy, being worn out, resolved to take matters in her own hands.

"This may be 'bad form' in Philadelphia; but," laughing, "at Berkeley I should give a strong hint about the hour."

"Well, Miss Shew," declared Sidney Spruce, "this is the first time I have ever been 'fired' from your house; but I shan't go unless the other fellows do."

"As for me," said Mr. Rittenhouse, "I have a very important communication to make to Miss Jackson; so, with her permission, I will stay until it is made."

"How strangely mysterious!" cried Nancy. "Let us go where it can't be overheard."

"Most certainly an offer!" said Mr. Spruce; then improvising—

"'Twas Sunday eve, at the stroke of eleven,
When Rahlie determined to enter Heaven;
But tho' loved by men and adored by ladies,
He was rejected—so lives now in Hades!"

"Wonderful!" cried the two concerned, clapping loudly; "better go into the poetry business."

"Miss Jackson," said Mr. Rittenhouse, turning his back on the lively Mr. Spruce, "I heard you say you were going to spend the winter in town; then may I have a walk three weeks from to-day?"

"Yes," smiled Nancy, very much pleased; for she knew now what an honor any attention from Rahl Rittenhouse was. "I'm not going to be

here though; for Edith starts South on Tuesday. I intend to visit my aunt."

He had taken out an engagement book, and paused, pencil in hand, to ask, "What is the address?"

"Caterpillar street—2013 is the number." She gave it with an inward tremor, watching him narrowly.

No quiver of his fingers betrayed the tremendous shock he had received; but as soon as possible he took his leave. The words were ringing in his ears and dancing before his eyes—2013 Caterpillar street! He felt angry, indignant, and, in the heat of his wrath, one or two rather strong adjectives escaped him as he tore the leaf from his memorandum-book, with the resolution to blot from his mind the girl whose name it bore. A man in his position could not afford to have anything to do with a young lady visiting north of Market street. It was with these sentiments that he finally composed himself to sleep.

On Monday afternoon Nancy arrived at her

aunt's little brick house, with its spotless marble steps and prim facings. Miss Hannah received her kindly; but it was with rather a forlorn feeling she took possession of the third-story front room. A day or two passed in the most unbroken quiet. The change from her gay life at Edith's was too sudden for her not to feel it keenly, and it was with dismay she looked forward to a long, dull winter. Of course, she did not now expect to see much of Edith's friends, and Miss Hannah's, probably, would be uncongenial.

Miss Green was a bright, sharp woman, very much interested in politics and women's rights—particularly suffrage—and she had devoted her busy life to the advancement of the latter and the purifying of the former. Her few friends were bent on much the same ends, yet even they called her a little peculiar.

One evening, not long after Nancy's arrival, a political acquaintance called on Miss Hannah, who, having made herself as bewitching as possi-

ble in a wonderful cap and gown, descended to the parlor, leaving her niece up-stairs. Presently the cap was stuck out of the door, and a voice called up: "Nancy! there's a young man here, and I'm going to send him up-stairs:" then, in a lower tone, "Dick, go right along."

Nancy had just time to settle herself in the sitting-room when the "young man" appeared. He was a dapper little pink-and-white specimen, illumined by a bright blue tie, and a massive watch-chain strong enough to hang him by. He was frightened, too, and advanced very timidly into the room.

"Miss Jackson," he explained, nervously clinging to the watch-chain, "your aunt sent me up."

"Good-evening!" Nancy said, kindly; "take this chair."

He sank into the comfortable seat and stammered—"My name's Chivick."

"You've such an advantage over me," she smiled, wishing she could bring relief to his embarrassment. "Jackson is such a common name,

while yours is so rare. Chivick—it sounds prettily, too."

He was getting better.

"You may change your name," he suggested.

Nancy laughed heartily.

"To be sure," she said; "but suppose I never get the chance."

"If you don't, nobody will," he answered, with a little bow. Mr. Chivick prided himself on his manners. "Miss Jackson, I came on a little errand for my sister."

"I was so sorry to miss her visit, to-day," said Nancy, who was enjoying this small specimen as an interruption to another monotonous evening, and unconsciously trying to make an impression on him.

"Em. was very much disappointed; she wanted to ask you to a small *musicale*, on next Tuesday evening."

"So kind!" murmured Nancy.

"You see, Miss Jackson," sitting bolt-upright in the lounging-chair, like a wax figure wound

up for the occasion, "it's given to Ed. and Mame, and is to be very small. You probably heard of the reception we gave them about two weeks ago. Jacobs was the caterer. Em. thought you might like to meet them socially."

"What is your sister's married name?" asked Nancy.

"Mrs. Bolter," he answered, proudly. He belongs to an elegant family; we're so much pleased at the match. May I tell Em. you'll come?"

"Yes," she said, "I'll certainly come. But you are not going? it's very early!"

He had risen from his chair, and was clinging to the table. Not being quite prepared for her sudden speech, he just managed to stammer out—"I hear Miss Green saying good-night to my friend, so I must go," and he retreated, bowing profoundly.

Aunt Hannah was highly delighted at this attention on the part of the Chivicks, and was very particular about Nancy's appearance Tuesday evening. She would not allow her to start until nearly nine o'clock.

"They'll like you better if you come late," she said, in her brusque, good-natured way. So Nancy waited. When, at last, she arrived on the scene of action—or, in other words, the Chivick's house—she found it a blaze of light, and feeble sounds from the piano, floating up to the dressing-room, plainly announced that the *musicale* had commenced.

Nancy was in high spirits, and, I regret to say, prepared to get much amusement from this affair. Mr. Chivick, attired in full dress-suit, including a pair of white kid gloves, was waiting on the landing to escort her to the parlor. All the timidity of the other evening had vanished. Dick was afraid of nothing, either human or supernatural, in his ancestral halls and surrounded by his devoted family. He gave a little skip as she approached, offering her his arm, with the words: "May I have the honor?" and so led her down into the parlor.

There were several people sitting stiffly round the large room; but the Chivick family rose and

came forward *en masse* to greet her. She was, evidently, the honored guest of the *musicale*. Mrs. Chivick, a tall, stout woman, with a very high color, gave her a loud kiss, as she said, warmly: "I'm real glad you've come. Dick's done nothing but talk about you. This is Mr. Chivick."

He was of diminutive stature, and of rather oily appearance, while something in his manner seemed to say: "What will you have to-day, ma'am?"

Em. and Mame, having embraced her cordially, expressed, in a somewhat noisy fashion, their joy at meeting her; and then, to Nancy's great relief, a slim young lady rose to sing. Dick escorted her to a sofa, where he took his stand by her side. The slim young lady had a remarkably powerful voice, but a poor articulation, so that the words of her song became a matter of speculation to the audience. Presently Dick bent down to whisper, gravely: "Isn't the sentiment refined?"

Wicked Nancy almost burst out laughing; but she managed to reply, in the same confidential tone: "Yes, and it is so charmingly rendered."

Dick resumed his occupation of curling his tiny moustache until his own piece came. It was a flute and piano duet, in which he played the flute with a good deal of quavering indecision, as though attempting to recapture each note as it escaped; but there was something almost pathetic in the delight Mrs. Chivick took in her son's performance. Her eyes never wandered from his face, as she pounded the time with her substantial foot, and, when he stopped, she led the applause by clapping vigorously. A melancholy song followed, called "Farewell," delivered by a melancholy maiden of some thirty-five winters, and which, probably, referred to her youth; and so, almost without intermission, the music continued until eleven o'clock, when supper was announced. Dick tripped up to Nancy, and together they led the procession into the dining-room. Supper was evidently not a thing to be trifled with or slighted.

Each lady spread a huge napkin over her dress; then fell systematically to work to do full justice to the plentiful repast; the gentlemen pursued much the same business-like course. Dr. Bolter fully lived up to his name, and his wife did her best to show she was now a member of the family. When the ladies had finished, Mrs. Chivick led the way down stairs.

"The gentlemen don't like to eat before the girls," she explained to Nancy, drawing her down beside her on the sofa. Nancy had not noticed any such bashfulness on the part of the gentlemen; but she refrained from saying so.

"Do you see Mame's weddin' presents?" Mrs. Chivick asked, pointing to a photograph behind them.

On close inspection Nancy perceived what it represented, and, not being able to admire it, she could only say: "Such a novel idea!"

"Yes," returned Mrs. Chivick, well pleased; "there were such a lot of them, and so elegant, that a gentleman friend of Dr. Bolter's,

in the business, persuaded us to have them taken." Then pointing with her fat forefinger: "That's our silver, and that's the tea-service his folks gave her; my, but it's handsome!"

"Yes," exclaimed Mrs. Bolter, who was standing by; "they did it so handsome that you and pa were ashamed, and gave me the silver."

"Now, Mame Chivick," her mother retorted, angrily, getting very red, "that's down-right mean. Your father's ready and willin' to give each of his children the same as he give you, and you've no right to talk that way; for we've set you up in housekeepin', and given Dr. Bolter all our practice."

"Hush, ma!" said Mame, mortified at this disclosure of family secrets; "I was only joking."

"My!" exclaimed Mrs. Chivick, wishing the girls would let her have her dress looser; "I'd like to hear some pretty song; but I know"—seeing Mrs. Bolter's warning look—"I know a person can't sing after a hearty meal."

"Hush, ma! that's not polite," said Em., hastily in a low voice.

Mrs. Chivick was tired of being corrected by her daughters, so she spoke out sharply: "Well, I don't grudge them the food, Em. Chivick! I wasn't a-sayin' that. You and Mame always trip me up so. I only wish your father had a let me had terrapin; but he said, for a few people like this, croquets and cream was plenty and ample."

"What beautiful weather we are having," said Em., hurriedly, to Nancy.

"Yes, very fine."

Nancy wanted to go home; the novelty having worn off, she was tired. Fortunately, an opportunity presented itself almost immediately. Mrs. Bolter came up to say, with conscious pride: "Ma, I must go; the doctor has been sent for. The Brown's baby has convulsions."

"Why you don't say so; its early, but I suppose you'll have to go. You see," turning to Nancy, "he's a young doctor, and can't afford to lose a patient."

Nancy at once decided to go with them, and, in spite of much opposition on the part of Mrs.

Chivick, she departed, leaving Dick bitterly disappointed that he was not permitted to accompany her home.

The next day Nancy came to breakfast with a determined expression on her face. Her aunt merely looked up from the paper to say "Good-morning!" and the meal proceeded in silence. Until that newspaper was finished, and Miss Green showed a disposition to talk, Nancy knew she might just as well keep quiet. But as the political editorials happened to be short, Miss Hannah laid aside the paper in the midst of breakfast and said: "Well, did you have a pleasant time?"

Nancy mentally braced herself before she answered: "They were as kind as possible, and did everything they could to make me enjoy it; but the truth is, Aunt Hannah, we are totally uncongenial, so the only pleasure I had was in laughing at them, and I don't think that is right."

"Humph!" said Miss Hannah, grimly, "pity you didn't come here first, and then visit your stylish friends afterwards."

"It isn't that at all," replied Nancy, feeling the fight had commenced, and determined to stand her ground. "I don't care where people live; but I like them to be cultivated and refined, and I'm sure there must be such families up here."

Miss Green was buried in the paper, so there was more silence for, perhaps, fifteen minutes. Then, as they arose to leave the table, she exclaimed, banging her chair on the floor: "You needn't have anything to do with the Chivicks; but if you get lonely, and your stylish friends leave you in the lurch, don't blame me for your dull time."

"I'm perfectly content alone with you," said Nancy, unconsciously exaggerating.

Miss Green laughed. "That's a rash statement, Nancy," she continued, the while sprinkling her plants from a huge watering-pot. "You do remind me of your mother. She was a wheedling, taking kind of girl, spite of her plain face, and tried to make every man, woman and child love her. You get your brains from her side of

the house, and your looks from your father. We Greens are a hard-featured lot," with that curious family pride people take in their failings. Nancy was absently plucking some dead leaves from a fish-geranium as Miss Green went on: "Your father is a shiftless kind of man; he and I are very good friends at a distance," with a short, dry laugh.

"I'm sure," broke in Nancy, politely, "he has the greatest respect for you."

This seemed to amuse Miss Hannah exceedingly. "He has—has he—respect for me?" she exclaimed. "The last time we met he told me I was an old fool, and I ordered him out of the house."

Nancy drew herself up; humility was not among her virtues. "In that case I had better leave, too."

This amused Miss Hannah still more.

"You don't suppose he went, do you?—not Captain J. It takes more than that to make him move." Then seeing Nancy was really offended,

she patted her kindly on the shoulder. "Don't be a goose, child," she said; "do you suppose he would have allowed you to come if it hadn't been all right?" And this had to content Nancy.

A few minutes later Miss Green spoke, in her abrupt fashion: "There *are* nice people up here; but I don't know them, and, the fact is, the Chivicks are about my only friends; and they won't give me up. Will you really be satisfied with me?"

"Yes," answered Nancy, touched by this appeal from her self-contained aunt. "You will be plenty of company for me; besides, I'm never lonely." And she thought she never was

CHAPTER IV.

THE ASSEMBLY BOOK.

THE Sunday afternoon when, according to agreement, she should have gone walking with Rahl Rittenhouse, Nancy sat alone in her aunt's little parlor. There were tears in her eyes, and many more in her handkerchief. I regret to add, they were not emblems of sorrow, but of anger, indignation and wounded pride. She had fully expected him to keep his engagement, though she had seen nothing of him during the three long weeks since she came to Caterpillar street; but she excused his not calling on the ground of his many social duties. A few minutes before, as she sat there patiently waiting to receive him, a small boy had brought a note for "Miss Jackson." Here Nancy swallowed her

tears, picked up the fashionable epistle from the floor, where she had flung it in her passion, and read it once more:—

"My Dear Miss Jackson: I regret extremely that a temporary indisposition forces me to beg that our engagement to walk, this afternoon, be postponed. I am also deeply grieved that the Assembly Book was closed—the strangers' list being completely filled—before I had an opportunity of sending in your name. Be assured, my dear Miss Jackson, that the many friends you made while amongst us will mourn your absence next Friday much more than you could regret the Assembly.

"Yours very sincerely,

"Rahl Rittenhouse."

"Sunday."

Poor Nancy once more resorted to her handkerchief. She was furious at herself for ever having wasted a thought on such a man; she was indignant that she had ever allowed herself to expect him, and to look forward, as she certainly had, to his coming. She was mortified—oh, so deeply mortified!—at the cool and tardy manner in

which he had announced that he could have nothing further to do with her. Just as though he had totally forgotten her existence, too, until reference to his engagement book showed her name for a walk that day.

"Oh!" muttered Nancy through her set teeth, "if I only had the chance to make him suffer for this! And I liked him, too! But he isn't an honorable man or a real gentleman, or he would keep an appointment, at no matter what cost. I know what he is," viciously; "he's a coward, afraid of what his associates might say if he kept his word to a girl on Caterpillar street." This last conclusion so pleased Miss Jackson that she came very near showing her dimples in a smile, while she slowly tore the hateful note into the smallest possible fragments. "There!" she said. "Mr. R.'s communication and my friendship for him go to pieces together." Then she quietly returned to Miss Green's room—satisfied that lady's curiosity as to why the gentleman had not come, by grimly announcing his very serious

illness, and settled herself to write the usual Sunday letters. Jack's epistle, fearfully and wonderfully composed, and the first he had ever sent her, almost summoned back the banished tears. She was homesick, and Jack was dearer to her than anything else in the wide world. She could not doubt his love while she held that letter in her hand, written and smeared by the sweat of his brow, and necessitating the cleanest of hands; and washing those grimy members was always a trying ordeal to poor Jack. She knew—for her father had told her—that Jack had commenced that letter just one day after she left home. She smiled, though there was a big lump in her throat, as she thought of the time and labor expended since then. When she had answered it, and her father's too, she pulled a third from her pocket, and, with a little flush on her cheeks, set about composing a reply.

This letter was written in a large, bold hand, entirely different from Mr. Rittenhouse's chirography. It began: "My Dear Miss Nancy," and

closed, "Ever Yours, Furness Latrobe." It contained, besides a good deal of nonsense, the announcement that he would call for Miss Jackson, the night of the 29th, at half-past nine P.M., to do himself the pleasure of taking her to the Charity Ball.

"I wonder," thought Nancy, bitterly, "if he knows I live north of that barrier; at any rate, I can tell him before I accept his invitation." This was a mere reflection on Mr. Rittenhouse; for she had known hearty, careless Latrobe too well at Berkeley, during the past summer, not to feel confident that a dozen barriers could not interfere with him. As she finished the bright little note of acceptance, and threw aside the pen, the two men who had so lately written to her stood out plainly in her mind. Certainly they were both brilliant men of the world, and both wonderfully attractive, Rahl more so, to a country girl like Nancy, owing to his polished manners and exalted position as an acknowledged leader of the world of society. It is much more pleasing to

any girl, city or country bred, to make a conquest of the leader than to captivate the led. The stronger an enemy, the harder the fight and more glorious the victory. Yet Latrobe's honest manhood, his abhorrence of anything small and dishonorable, could not fail to have their charm with a girl of Nancy's frank disposition. She imagined how he would laugh at a man who could have such fearful respect for a silly, local prejudice; she began to feel sorry for Rahl, as her sex always will for the weak and ridiculed. Then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, as the memory of his treatment returned: "Sorry for Rahl? no indeed!" She would never, never be sorry for him; so she would join in Latrobe's laugh at the heartless snob.

"Now," she said to herself, very firmly, "when he comes up to me at the Charity Ball—for, of course, he will have politeness enough for that—I shall keep my temper; but I shall not give him a single dance. Oh! I know what I'll do," and she laughed gleefully; "if Mrs. Bolter agrees to

chaperon me, I'll introduce my fine Mr. Rittenhouse to that gay woman of fashion."

These pleasant thoughts were interrupted by Mr. Chivick's card, delivered by the smiling Bridget, with the question, "Please, ma'am, shall I put another plate for supper?"

"Yes," Nancy replied, for she knew little Dick was stationary till ten o'clock. His visits were getting more suspiciously frequent every week.

CHAPTER V.

CHARITY BALL.

MISS HANNAH'S ancient clock on the stairs chimed out in mournful numbers nine o'clock, which, of course, meant half-past nine; for the aged timepiece had been in its teens with the century, and, like its old human contemporaries, had great difficulty in keeping up with the times.

As the last stroke rang out, Nancy put the final pin in the roses on her shoulder; then leaning slightly forward, with her hands loosely clasped, surveyed herself minutely in the long, old-fashioned glass. The criticism must have been very severe; for there was a little frown on her white forehead, and she changed the crimson roses from her shoulder to her belt. In that position they were evidently more pleasing; for

the frown disappeared and a smile of satisfaction took its place. Well she might smile at the sweet reflection; for the India mulle fitted the pretty figure to perfection, then fell in a cascade of lace to the tiny buckled shoes,—nothing to relieve its creamy whiteness save the great bunch of Jacqueminot roses at her waist. As a peal from the front-door bell rang out in the stillness, Aunt Hannah walked in to give her opinion of the completed toilet; then Nancy gathered up her three bouquets and tripped gaily down the stairs to meet Mr. Latrobe.

Perhaps some little attention is due this neglected hero, not alone as the escort of so sweet a lady, but on his own particular account, as a gentleman of unusual character, as an important actor in this little domestic drama, and as a lover loyal and true. He stood six feet one in his patent leathers, this Tuesday evening of the great ball, his curly head just escaping the low brass chandelier. His blue eyes had an inextinguishable twinkle, as though making a constant

effort to keep the large mouth smiling; when he laughed it was so whole-hearted and ringing that the desire to join in was irresistible. Yet, in spite of the merry eyes and jovial laugh, you knew the instant you saw him that both eyes and face could melt to almost womanly tenderness whenever the large heart within felt moved. Though his years numbered fully twenty-five, he had never entirely outgrown his boyhood, and was apt to carry his hands in his trousers pockets, or wear his hat on an angle at the back of his head. He had been, in his day, the most popular man at college, and, strangely enough, the favoriteism had not spoiled him. It was a permanent popularity, too, founded on his kind-hearted geniality and almost unfailing good humor, though the fact that he could knock any fellow out in one round, that he took the lead in all athletics, and that he had some brains in the bargain, made a combination unusual enough to exact admiration. When he left Princeton, in the May of his senior year, to attend his father's death-bed, the

boys accompanied him in a body to the junction, and for a month following wore the crape supplied by one of his chief mourners.

Such was the man Nancy greeted with rather a commonplace "I'm so glad to see you, and oh!"—with just an instant's pause—"I'm very much obliged for the flowers. It was lovely of you to send me cut ones, and a bouquet, too."

Here, as she paused, Mr. Latrobe took occasion to remark on the number she had received.

"Yes," she said, with a little smile, "I am fortunate. Mr. Chivick sent me this variegated bunch, and the violets are anonymous."

Yes, Nancy, anonymous; but you know very well who sent them, and pride should cry out to you to leave them at home did you not look on them as a good omen for the evening.

Every one has, of course, heard of conscience-money, so it will be easy to understand the sentiment which prompted Rahl Rittenhouse to send that fragrant bouquet of conscience-flowers to the girl he had treated so shabbily. She might

doubt their source—most probably she would doubt it; but he felt a certain comfortable satisfaction in sending them.

"Pray, who is Mr. Chivick?" inquired the tall young man, feeling absurdly jealous, and trying not to show it.

Nancy laughed. "He's a little, pink-and-white fellow, with a very large heart and a great deal of mother."

Mr. Latrobe had an early opportunity to judge for himself of the youth in question, as he was awaiting them in the lobby of the Academy, where the ball is annually held. What he saw was a frail-looking little gentleman, with weak blue eyes and weak blonde hair, and a weak expression."

"Here's your programme, Miss Nancy," this slight mortal remarked, in rather a faint nasal voice. "I've been waiting most an hour for you' so I could engage three waltzes as soon as you came." This was a flattering insinuation that her card would fill rapidly, so she smiled encour-

agingly, as the thin voice went on to say: "Em.'s got elegant places for you in the circle."

Nancy's wraps were soon laid aside, and, as she entered the doorway on Latrobe's arm and faced the huge building, floored over from circle to stage, and filled with a gay crowd in motley colors, a little cry of pleasure escaped her, while she stood eagerly drinking in the wonderful sight. Gilmore's orchestra, imported for the occasion from New York, was pouring forth bewildering strains from within a bower of greens on one side the floor; while Hassler—dear to every true Philadelphian's heart—was equally screened on the other. Flowers were everywhere—great globes of them hung from the galleries—and they stood banked in all the ugly angles of the building, while beneath the dazzling chandelier had been suspended a floral "Charity" wrought in brilliant hues.

"It's fairyland!" exclaimed Nancy, at last.

"Then let's go add to its population." And presently they were whirling over the waxed

floor, among the gayly dressed people—people from East, West, North and South—all meeting this one night in the three hundred and sixty-five on a footing of equality. Caterpillar street brushed rudely past Walnut street, and the latter, in the spirit of the occasion, charitably refrained from haughty exclamation at the contact. Though the actual footing might be the same, and they might even dance to the common music, yet there was no intermingling, and one stood, in reality, as far aloof from the other as though the spirit, if not the substance, of Market street had followed them even into the sacred precincts of the Academy.

When the music stopped, Nancy and her partner were directly in front of a crowd of men heaped around the music stand, spying out and seeking whom they might next attack, and giving one very much the idea of a huge lot of remnants at a dry-goods store,—not talking together, but standing with moody brows, gazing blankly at the moving throng.

On the edge of this bunch of men Rahl Ritten

house had paused; as Nancy stopped she saw him at once, and her face flushed as she drew Latrobe in an opposite direction. "Come," she said; "I ought to present you to Mrs. Bolter, because you know she is matronizing me."

Mrs. Bolter grandly acknowledged the introduction, and made known to Dr. Bolter, through the expressive medium of the foot, that he was to vacate his seat in favor of the new comer. Dr. Bolter, not being very widely acquainted, took refuge in the nearest aisle, where he stood hopelessly gazing at the vast throng, for all the world as though his best friend had therein been lost, never to reappear.

Mr. Chivick made the best of such an excellent opportunity by offering to show Nancy the beautiful sight of the building from the top balcony; but he stopped at the first, and leading her to seats somewhat separated from the many spectators, nervously asked her to sit down. Something in his little white face, from which all signs of the companion pink had fled, gave Nancy a

vague idea of what was coming. "It must not come," she thought, decidedly; and, as always happens in such cases, her first remark only helped to precipitate matters.

"What a pretty idea," she said, "to make that word of flowers and hang it in the centre. Charity certainly does cover a multitude of both sins and sinners, to-night." And she laughed feebly at her weak attempt.

"Miss Nancy," began poor little Dick, losing his breath in a sort of gasp, "please let charity be your motto, and—give me a flower."

This was not the question she had expected, so Nancy laughed hysterically.

"Don't, Miss Nancy," he went on, swallowing some painful obstruction in his throat. "I came prepared this evening to offer you my heart and hand; your happiness shall be mine, and you shall never regret this step."

Poor Dick's studied speeches had gotten rather mixed. His embarrassment had borrowed fragments from the one composed to celebrate the joy

of his acceptance. Having suddenly reached the grand finale, with the omission of all intermediate steps, Dick broke down completely.

Nancy laughed again—it was all so funny,—this little fellow—such a different lover from the one she had dreamed of, coming, like a conqueror, to demand his own—offering himself in phrases stolen from favorite novels. And such a queer place, too, for a man to put such a question.

Here she saw the blue eyes fill with tears and the weak little mouth quiver.

"Forgive me!" she cried, impulsively, stretching out her hand. How cruel she had been to laugh.

He pressed her hand softly. "Yes," he murmured; "only do try to like me, please, Miss Nancy."

"I do like you, Dick; but not in the way you mean. You must never think of me in that way again—never!—really, you mustn't. I'm not good enough to marry any one, and I don't want to." She ended conclusively: "Now, we had

better go down, or they will begin to wonder about us. And, oh, dear!" she added, mentally, regretting the few minutes of her absence, "perhaps Rahl Rittenhouse has been looking for me." Nevertheless she felt very gently inclined towards her delicate little suitor, who made her the object of his adoration upon such a short acquaintance. Half-way down the stairs she turned to him with a world of pity in the gray eyes and a sad little droop to the dimpled mouth. "I am so sorry," she said, once more offering her hand; "but can't we still be friends?"

Dick could not trust his voice; but he raised the gloved hand reverently and kissed it.

"Why, Miss Jackson!" said a merry voice at her elbow, as they returned to the floor, "have you been resurrected from the dead, or whither have you fled?"

Nancy's heart had just been so deeply moved that this gay sally scarcely evoked a smile. The irrepressible Mr. Spruce then claimed that waltz as his, and off they started, leaving poor Dick

to surreptitiously wipe away the tears that consecrated his first and only love.

"You did look rather pale, Miss Jackson," resumed Mr. Spruce, "until my rubicund face reflected some color into yours. Not mourning for Rahl, I hope; he isn't worth it, believe me. Don't weep and wail for Rahl; he's not worth it at all, and he's only loving you for fun; he's mashing too many; he don't care a penny for the nicest girl under the sun!"

Nancy's face was flaming now from no law of reflection, and Spruce, being the softest-hearted fellow in the world, honestly regretted his thoughtless speech as he left her with Latrobe. Of course, he knew Latrobe, of Baltimore—Spruce was renowned for knowing everybody, and prided himself on his extended acquaintance; so he gave Latrobe a friendly grip, as he whispered, with a sidelong glance at Nancy: "Congratulate you, old fellow: she's a beaut'."

Just then Tommy Pyne came up to beg a waltz, and afterwards Furness brought up several

of his friends, who each and all had to have a dance. So the evening passed, and still Rahl Rittenhouse kept away. He had seen her; had watched her, indeed, from the first moment she stepped on the floor. He had longed to go up to her at once and make friends, but his abominable pride held him back when he saw her with a strange man, most probably a retail clerk—for his face was familiar; and yet Mr. Rittenhouse was forced to admit that, for a clerk, his style and general air were certainly remarkable. He had actually brought himself to the point of debating whether he could speak, for a few minutes, with Nancy without attracting the attention of the Dillings and the Raynors, who were at that moment on the floor—not to mention his aunt, who usually kept her eagle eyes upon him—when he saw Miss Jackson introduce her handsome escort to a stout, coarse-looking woman, gorgeously arrayed in lavender and pink, with a coronet of large Rhine stones encircling her frizzy hair. That was a little too much for Rahl—he

gave a groan of relief at his narrow escape. Nancy should not have the extreme pleasure of speaking with Mr. Rittenhouse, during that evening at least. Poor Nancy! Her little schemes of vengeance broke like so many bubbles, all because Mrs. Bolter wore lavender and pink crowned with Rhine stone ornaments—Rhine stones, indeed!—they were diamonds of the first water, as their wearer would have indignantly assured you.

After that Rahl stilled the longing to look again into the great gray eyes and to listen to the sweet voice, by hastening to ask a waltz of Miss Burgess, one of the most popular buds of the season. It pleased his vanity and made him forget his annoyance to see how eagerly her many partners were put aside to make a place on her card for him.

"Oh, but I must have a dance now, too, you know," he pleaded, in a low voice.

"Why, of course, this is your dance. I had almost forgotten it. Mr. Riddle, you must excuse me, or take the last half."

Mr. Riddle was not a meek young man, and he certainly would have resented this interference with his rights had it come from any other source. But who would have thought of disputing a claim with Rahl Rittenhouse, the social pass-key and guardian of the Assembly Book, the price of whose favor was far above rubies to every youthful inhabitant of the world of fashion? Not the bravest man in the crowd, with the exception of Spruce, but would have yielded, as did young Riddle, with a mere muttered demur.

Leaders of society are all martyrs in one way or another; that night Rahl certainly deserved to be numbered with the sainted band. He waltzed and flirted with Miss Burgess, Miss Herwood and all the most charming belles of the season; yet he would have exchanged them in a body for that one little white-robed figure ever and anon flitting by him in the dance. He tried to understand why it was her face haunted him, and why he always half-expected to hear a pretty Southern accent from each new partner he chose; won-

dered why he kept looking for a pair of deep gray eyes among the girls he danced with, when he knew very well he should find only blue or brown. Then, with a little angry shake, he laid it all to his conscience; it was punishing him for having treated such a sweet little girl so unkindly. He was glad she carried his flowers—he had given her some pleasure through them, at any rate.

"Seen pretty Nancy Jackson, Rittenhouse?" inquired Spruce, thumping him playfully on the back, in passing.

Whether it was the blow or the question excited Rahl's wrath cannot be said; but he answered, irritably: "No! I haven't, and I wish you'd let your hands go on a vacation with your brains. I'm looking for Miss Karrall."

"I know—Baltimore girl—glassy eyes and tow head; she's in the corridor with Latrobe."

"You mean that fellow who came on to our Assemblies last winter?"

"The same, and, to make the description more

telling, the fellow who has cut you out with Miss Jackson."

After this Parthian arrow, well-aimed at Rahl's pride, Mr. Spruce took his departure.

The target was of unusual size, and, though the marksman was careless, the shot sped right into the bull's-eye. What a fool he had been to believe that splendid fellow, who walked the floor like a man of the world, could be anything but his own equal. Rahl was utterly miserable, and he made no attempt to conceal it; he had been a moral coward, and he knew it. His aunt and Maude were quite ready to leave; the latter always had the good sense to be ready and willing after having been "stuck" for a couple of hours with two or three self-sacrificing men.

At the same hour, in Miss Green's little parlor, Nancy was smiling a grateful assent to Latrobe's proposition—that she should walk with him every Sunday during the rest of her visit in Philadelphia.

Baltimore was a long way to come for a walk with her. It was kind of him to want to break

the monotony of her days. Yes, she would be very glad if he would come so often to see her. But after this generous friend had gone, and, before she put out the lights, several tears fell into the bunch of violets, to prove to them alone that her evening had not been as pleasant as some one could have made it; and, when she mounted to her little room, the anonymous flowers were flung, through the open window, far out on the deserted street, where an early milkman, going his rounds, found them, drooping, but still fragrant, and carried them home to his country sweetheart.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BURGLAR.

THE next day Nancy wandered about the house, utterly worn out and disconsolate. In her account of the ball to Miss Hannah she made no mention of Rahl Rittenhouse, though previously he had been a frequent topic of conversation between them. She was so wounded—so cut to the quick—that she could not venture to speak of him. She saw now that he was unwilling to have his friends know of his acquaintance with her, and this mortification was the hardest thing for her to bear. But, perhaps, the bitterest drop was that she allowed herself to be interested in him. She thought of their short, pleasant friendship, and of his many kind attentions at first—of how he had tried to make her

like him, and how well he had succeeded; then, as his subsequent conduct recurred to her mind, she said to herself, contemptuously: "I am in love with him—a man who looks down on me as his social inferior."

It is not good for a girl to have one man constantly in her thoughts, and it had been so with Nancy. In one connection or another Rahl Rittenhouse was always before her.

She had a great many things to worry over at this time—particularly the home news, which was most discouraging. Mrs. Jackson was, of course, unwell, and the children had chosen this convenient season to have the measles; but, above all, her darling Jack was not making himself beloved. The lugubrious step-mother wrote that he was a great trial, and growing worse each day.

"If I were at home I could manage him," said Nancy. But there was no possibility of her going until May, at the earliest. Then Dick Chivick was another thorn. Poor Dick! Whenever Nancy thought of him and his elaborate proposal, the

wistful blue eyes would rise before her and her heart grow very pitiful.

At last the monotonous day after the ball had dragged out its weary length, and, at nine o'clock, Nancy was only too glad to prepare for the night. Miss Green's cold was no better—rather a trifle worse as evening came on—and she seemed so feverish that Nancy insisted upon sleeping with her. Nancy was completely tired out with her dissipation of the previous evening, and at once fell into a heavy slumber. Hours passed, when suddenly she awoke with the peculiar conviction that some one was in the room, and that her aunt had wakened her. Cautiously she touched Miss Green's hand. It was cold and clammy as a dead person's, and shaking convulsively. All her life Nancy had dreaded a burglar more than anything else; but now that the danger had come she felt cool enough to think what would be the best thing to do. Besides, the knowledge that poor, sick Miss Hannah depended on her gave her courage. Before she had time

to open her eyes she felt a bright light swing in front of them, and then it receded. She heard the footsteps go to the other side of the bed, where Miss Hannah lay. Nancy pressed her death-like hand; but poor Miss Green could not simulate sleep; her nervous trembling made that an impossibility, and, as the man bent over the bed, her black eyes popped wide open. He clutched her throat; then, in a hoarse voice, whispered, as he glanced at the quietly sleeping Nancy: "If ye holler I'll choke ye!"

As if knowing all the secrets of the house, he slipped her keys from under the bolster, and, fitting one in the big old wardrobe, Miss Hannah's family silver appeared to view. He loaded himself and went out into the entry two or three times, and then Nancy concluded he was pausing to tie it up in a sack, before returning for the money. Instantly she decided on her course of action. With one spring she had reached the door, shut it, and, as his great strength pressed against the other side, she pushed the bolt, and

sank in a little white heap on the floor, every atom of strength and courage gone. She felt sure her last hour had come; that he would burst open the door and kill her. Perhaps five minutes passed while frightened Nancy lay there listening to every sound. She heard him rush down stairs, fling open the shutters,—then a confused thud as he dropped the silver, and after that—silence. It was only when she knew he had gone that her self-possession came back. Miss Hannah lay moaning piteously;—the would-be politician, the strong-minded advocate of suffrage had become simply one of the weakest of her sex.

Nancy soothed her in a rather shaky voice: "Auntie, it's all right now"—a little sob—"I'll call the policeman"—another sob—"and get the pistol."

This weapon of defence, not being intended for immediate use, was kept hidden away in Miss Hannah's underclothing. Nancy managed to find it, and, opening a window, rapidly fired two or three times in the street.

The excitement that followed can hardly be described. Miss Green thought the burglar had come back, and was almost wild with terror. "Don't kill me! don't kill me!" she shrieked; then, springing up from the bed, she rushed to the window, screaming "Murder! murder!" at the top of her voice.

This and the fright were too much for Nancy; she laughed and cried hysterically. Windows were hastily opened, and the neighbors' heads were thrust out. In a few minutes quite a crowd of men had collected in front of 2013. The policemen entered by the window the burglar had used as an exit, and began carefully to search the house. The cook and house-maid appeared in evening costume, calling on all the saints to protect them from the policemen. They must have heard the noise, but had prudently kept still. Before they all quieted down, the first gray streaks of dawn had crept into the East, and Miss Hannah was in a high fever. For a day or so she was very ill; but careful nursing

conquered the fever, leaving her weak and cross. She was a trying patient; everything had to be faultlessly done, and she always had to be coaxed into eating her numerous gruels. Every night Nancy was called upon to affirm that she had examined each bolt and tried each lock, before Miss Hannah would compose herself to sleep; and often in the night, when she imagined some one was in the room, Nancy must get up to look under the bed. Then she worried a good deal about the stolen silver, but refused to offer any reward for it.

"I don't want it now, after that man's dirty fingers have touched it," she would say, decidedly.

Bridget, the valued house-maid had departed the morning after the robbery, carrying with her a few spoons the burglar had overlooked. This aggravated Miss Hannah; for she had taken the girl without a reference, and been much pleased with her efficiency and good nature. She always spoke of her now as "that viper."

In the kindness of her heart, Mrs. Chivick sent Em. round to stay with them. She did her best to be useful; twenty times a day she wanted to beat up Miss Green's pillows, or asked, in her high-pitched voice, how she felt, until, at last, Miss Hannah lost patience, and bluntly told her to go home. Em.'s feelings were hurt, and it required much coaxing on Nancy's part to restore her natural good humor.

"You must never mind sick people, you know," she said; and when Em. finally departed it was with the settled conviction that they could not have done without her.

Nancy had very little time for being low-spirited; now that real work and real trouble had come lesser trials departed. From morning till night she was busy—housekeeping, nursing and writing for her aunt. On Friday came this note from Latrobe:—

"BALTIMORE, February 1.

"MY DEAR MISS NANCY: I have just read an account, in to-day's paper, of your burglar scare. I was proud to see that you distinguished yourself. 'Miss Jackson bolted the door when the thief left,' reminds me of that proverbial old fellow who locked the stable after his horse was stolen. I can imagine Miss Green's wrath and indignation at any one daring to elope with the family silver. My nerves have been so unstrung that I intend having extra bolts put all over our house. Seriously, I am terribly worried about you two 'lone, lorn females' left there to encounter burglars and sich; so I am contemplating giving you a dog of my sister's as protection. It was only by expatiating on his abnormal appetite for the parlor rugs that I persuaded the family to give him up. I am coming on for Sunday, and shall be up in the afternoon. If you extend a very cordial invitation to tea it may be accepted. I am certainly going to spend the evening.

"With regards to your aunt,

"Very sincerely yours,

"FURNESS LATROBE."

Nancy sent this answer immediately:—

"My Dear Mr. Latrobe: So much obliged for your sister's dog. I am afraid he will not like our rugs; what kind does he prefer? Don't you think it would be better for you to come Saturday evening, also Sunday morning, and stay to dinner? otherwise we will see so little of each other.

"Yours sincerely,

"Nancy Jackson."

Saturday evening, about seven o'clock, a messenger boy appeared at 2013 with a note:—

"My Dear Miss Nancy: Happy thought! I will be with you in a few minutes. Sorry I cannot accept your pressing invitation for to-morrow; but am staying with an old Furness—grand-aunt—who will be hurt if I do not dine with her. What a bore it is to be so popular! However, I am coming to Philadelphia all this spring, so I may be able to give you a day later on. The dog will shortly appear. He prefers Turkish.

"Yours, &c.,

"F. Latrobe."

And in a little while they arrived. Nancy could not help laughing at the dog. He was a

small, thin, black-and-tan terrier, with long ears standing straight up in the air.

"Oh, you handsome beast!" laughed Furness, shaking his head at him; "you little charmer! Aren't you pleased at this delicate attention, Miss Nancy?"

"He's not a raving beauty," she returned, still smiling.

"Never mind, Jack," said Mr. Latrobe, picking him up; "we are not appreciated here; we had better go home."

"You will have to change his name," said Nancy.

"Why? Is it too plebeian for your haughty ears?"

"No; but don't you remember my brother Jack? I could never call the handsomest dog in creation by his name, you know."

"Well, mightn't *he* be induced to make the change? for, really, this dog won't answer unless he's called Jack. Yes, there is one other name that will bring him; but ——"

"What is it?" asked Nancy, seeing him hesitate.

"Well, it's pretty forcible ——."

"Couldn't you soften it a little?"

They both laughed.

"I can try. Here, Darn-it! Darn-it, come here!" in an angry tone, and the dog came. "You will have to raise your voice a good deal."

"Well, I can do that. I suppose you think I never get angry."

"Oh, dear, no. I fully believe you have a strong, healthy temper. But, now I want to hear about that terrible burglary."

"Your modest wish shall be granted;" and Nancy gave a long description.

"It positively makes me creep," Furness exclaimed at the end. "I wish my mother were here."

"Well, I can just tell you it was no joke, and I believe any one would have been scared."

"There's no doubt I would have fainted away," continued Latrobe, who liked to see Nancy indignant.

"It nearly killed Aunt Hannah; she has been very ill ever since."

Just then they heard a ghostly sound, which faintly resembled "Nancy!"

"Oh!" cried Latrobe, shaking violently; "there he is now! I wish some one would hold my hand."

Nancy, stooping down by the register, called up—"What is it, auntie?"—then aside to Latrobe—"This is our private telephone."

"Is that Mr. Latrobe?" came Miss Hannah's voice, faintly.

"Yes, auntie, and he wants you to hold his hand, please."

"Ask him to come to tea, to-morrow."

"Thanks! I'll be delighted!" shouted Mr. Latrobe's full, strong voice.

"Nancy!" was the instantaneous reply, "tell him not to hollo so—he'll take the roof off the house—and shut the register; I want more heat."

The next afternoon Furness took Nancy a long walk in West Philadelphia, where they had the

pleasure of seeing Rahl sauntering with Miss Karrall. He seemed bored, and was evidently not enjoying himself. "He didn't look that way when he walked with me," thought Nancy; and, as he passed them, she was too much absorbed in conversation with Mr. Latrobe to give him even a glance.

The tea was a great success. Miss Hannah, though in a rather subdued mood, felt well enough to grace the occasion. After pouring out the coffee and helping the frizzled beef, she involved them all in an argument on "revealed religion," from which they were finally rescued by Darnit's timely interference. He had a very attractive habit of begging, in the most piteous way, for something to eat.

"I don't believe you feed this dog at all," remarked Furness, helping him to a bit of frizzled beef. "He's actually ravenous."

"That dog get's about twice as much as any of the family; but he has a remarkable and never-failing appetite at all hours," said Nancy.

"If I have one particular aversion it is to dogs," announced Miss Hannah; "and I will not pamper the animals."

Nancy smiled. In her heart Miss Green was the kindest of mortals, and ever since Darnit's arrival she had worried over him, wondering if he would be warm enough in the yard at night, and whether dog-biscuit had not better be his exclusive diet. At first Nancy could not induce her to call him by his new name. She insisted it was profane; but no one could resist Nancy in a coaxing mood, so she finally yielded.

During the evening Dick Chivick called. He was very meek and humble, and there was a timidity about him almost painful to see. Nancy thought he had been crying, his eyes were so red. Under her kind treatment he soon brightened up and grew quite excited about the burglar.

"If I had only been here, Miss Nancy," he said, in his small, piping voice, "I'd have killed him!"

Nancy did not laugh; somehow it made her feel a little sad.

"I'm glad you were not here; for he might have shot you, and I wouldn't have you hurt for anything."

Dick blushed with pleasure, and no wonder he felt that his chances of making Nancy Mrs. Chivick were not so poor after all.

CHAPTER VII.

A SLIP IN THE MUD.

AS day by day Miss Hannah grew stronger and better, she once more threw herself into her former occupations. Sundays were the brightest days of the week to Nancy; but the six in between were sometimes very unhappy. She was left so much to her own thoughts that she brooded over her troubles. There came a great bitterness into her heart against Philadelphians in general and Rahl Rittenhouse in particular. It seemed so hard to be left out of all the fun and gayety that went on in Mrs. Rittenhouse's set, where she knew she would have been one of the blithest of them all. If Rahl had only made a little effort for her, it might have been so different. "But why should he make an effort for you?" said her truthful conscience.

"Well," she returned, "he need not have hindered my efforts, and been rude." Here conscience was forced to confess she was right.

Night after night patient little Dick rang Miss Green's bell to ask for Miss Nancy, and, according to previous instruction, Maria replied, sometimes rejoicing his soul by admitting him into the sunshine of Nancy's presence, and at other times —much oftener, in fact—saying "Miss Jackson begged to be excused." It never occurred to him to take exception at any decree of his goddess. There is a saying, "The king can do no wrong;" in this case it was the queen. Everything she did or said was perfection, in Dick's sight. When she forbade him bringing any more five-pound boxes of cream chocolates, he put the money into flowers; and when she told him he must not waste his money so, the blue eyes grew very large and wistful, as he said, "Oh, Miss Nancy, mayn't I bring you violets?"

Somehow it never occurred to her that Dick's love could be anything but feeble, like himself; so

she thoughtlessly allowed him to come to see her, more for her own amusement than for anything else.

And what of Rahl Rittenhouse in these days before Lent? You remember, he had resolved to blot her entirely from his mind, and this he had tried to do; but though days would pass without his having once thought of her, yet some slight gesture—some peculiar expression—would bring her at once before him, as real and lifelike as possible. Just when her image seemed to be fading away, he was obliged to write her that note about the Assembly, and afterwards his conscience gave him no little trouble. Once or twice he found himself wondering what she had thought of him when she read it, and he could not escape the guilty feeling that he—Rahl Rittenhouse—had behaved to a lady as no gentleman should. But now society had many claims on his time, and he plunged into the furious whirl of gayeties that were crowded in the brief space before Lent. But though Nancy's memory

might be only a cobweb in his brain, fate had decreed that it should not be brushed away.

It was about six o'clock one rainy day, near the middle of February, as Rahl was hurrying homeward, to make preparations for several early engagements, that he was compelled to wait, at Broad and Chestnut streets, for some heavy wagons to pass. As he stood impatiently by the curb-stone, he noticed a slight gossamer-clad figure dart recklessly forward, trying to cross in front of a huge brewery cart. If the driver had not immediately reined up his horses there would have been a serious accident; for her foot slipped in the mud, and down she fell. Rahl picked her up, while a policeman collected her bundles; and, as she lifted her face to thank them both, the lamplight fell on Nancy Jackson. Nancy, in the oldest of clothes and shabbiest of hats, and covered with mud, was a very different figure from the dainty little belle of Mrs. Rittenhouse's ball. Rahl helped her to the corner, where he proceeded to improve her appearance with his spot-

less handkerchief. As he finished, she gave her hat a pull to right it, grasped her bundles in one arm, her umbrella in the other, and started to walk down Broad street. He took the parcels with a gentle "Allow me," and continued beside her.

"I'll have your handkerchief washed and sent to you," she said, looking straight ahead.

"It's a shame for you to be out so late," said Rahl. "How did it happen?"

"Very naturally," she returned, loftily.

"May I take you home?" he asked, feeling more contented than he had for some time.

"No, I thank you!" was her polite response.

"Well, I am going to walk beside you," he announced, decidedly.

There was no reply, and they went on in silence. He felt as completely at his ease as ever, while she was both angry at him and disconcerted by her recent adventure.

"Won't you please tell me," he asked, in a most beseeching tone, "what you are doing out at this hour?"

"I went to Wanamaker's for some buttons. Aunt Hannah was busy, so she sent me. I suppose it's 'bad form.'"

He was indignant. "It's not only bad form; it is dangerous for a young, pretty girl to be out after dark in a large city. You don't know all the dangers; but take my word for them, and," very suddenly, "promise me you'll not do it again."

She raised her head and looked at him; he could see her eyes flashing. "Promise *you!*" she exclaimed, scornfully.

The absurdity of his position suddenly struck him; he saw how peculiar, to say the least, this solicitude must seem to her. Rahl Rittenhouse was not often at a loss for words; but now he could find nothing to say, so, in silence, they waited for the Sansom street car. When it stopped, Nancy jumped in. "Good-bye," she said, coldly, though she knew he was following her. For some time the car was crowded; but finally, as they neared their destination, Rahl secured a seat by her side.

"Miss Jackson," he said, "I have never had a chance to apologize for not claiming another walk. I meant to explain at the Charity; but, you were so surrounded I didn't have the chance."

Nancy said nothing; but the clear, candid eyes asked plainly, "How dare you tell such a story?"

Rahl was rather discomposed, and stammered helplessly over his next remark: "I—my afternoons—that is, I have been engaged for every other Sunday." Nancy laughed; it was so ridiculous to see him embarrassed. "Miss Jackson, when may I have one?"

"Oh," she said, wickedly, "I am engaged for every Sunday, so I must deny myself the pleasure of walking with you."

When they arrived at 2013, she did not ask him in; but volunteered this speech: "Good-night, and thanks for all your kindness."

The sarcasm of this went right through him like an arrow; but he admired her for it, and was struck by her bravery in daring to snub him.

No other woman he had ever met could have done it.

"May I come in?" he asked, with an audacity that almost took her breath away. What could she say but "certainly?" And he came in. Yes, not only came in, but took a comfortable arm-chair, and proceeded to make himself agreeable. Miss Hannah was charmed when she heard that Rahl Rittenhouse, one of Nancy's "stylish friends," had at last appeared. She insisted upon asking him to tea. Nancy begged and pleaded all in vain.

"I'll just send out for some oysters and cake; he'll enjoy it, see if he don't."

"But he isn't a friend of mine," entreated Nancy, feeling this was more than human nature could stand.

"Well, he *may* be," said Miss Hannah, with a knowing shake of the head, "and I'll go down to ask him myself." And she did go down—did ask him, and, if you will believe me, he stayed not only to tea, but until nearly ten o'clock. A

greater part of the time Miss Hannah monopolized him. At the table they commenced a long argument on politics, which was continued in the parlor, and lasted till after nine o'clock. To do him justice, Rahl could talk very well, and to-night he exerted himself more than usual in his effort to make a favorable impression on Miss Green. He was so pleasant, and enjoyed the oysters so much, that, altogether, that lady was highly delighted. Nancy for a long while remained politely cool; but, being an impressible young person, and, besides, secretly on his side, she began to thaw a little. "Well," she thought to herself, as she heard him ask Miss Green if he might call again, "impudence can go no further; but, perhaps, he is sorry for his conduct, and if he is, I'll forgive him." Oh, fickle Nancy! in the morning fierce with anger, and then in the evening you "forgive him."

If Rahl felt contrite he certainly concealed it remarkably well, nor was there anything in his conversation to betray his penitence. When he

took his leave, it was with several well-turned compliments on the pleasant evening he had spent, and the hope of many more equally delightful.

He was a deliberate man, and in regard to women not at all susceptible. His thirty years had passed without one real affair of the heart—of course, I except those early loves that are so violent while they last. It is a fortunate dispensation of Providence that they are soon over. He was not indifferent to women; he liked almost all of them, in a brotherly sort of way. But now a great wave of something very like love seemed to sweep over him, and leave him a different man. He did not analyze the feeling, and call it love; but he knew that this evening was the happiest he had ever spent, and he almost reeled with the sudden sensation of such passionate joy in life. It was the first stage—the unreasoning, blissfully happy period that soon passes off, leaving a man cool, determined and capable of calculating narrowly the chances of success or failure.

Rahl had no sooner left her than he longed to see the full, red lips pout again, and the gray eyes flash. He recalled her as she was at first—the dimpling, blushing little stranger, telling him her idea of love. I cannot tell you half the foolish dreams, sleeping and waking, he had that night; probably you know much better than I do. And yet, such is the duplicity of man that on being asked why he was not at the Villing's German, he answered, shortly, "Couldn't, on account of business." Oh, Rahl Rittenhouse! I fear it will take more than love to make you overcome the prejudices of your set.

For a day or two his delightful flow of spirits lasted, and then a wild desire to see her again took possession of him; but somehow he could not find the chance to slip off unobserved to Caterpillar street. It took a great deal of time to attend to his social duties, even in the most superficial manner; for his evenings were filled with balls, receptions, dinners and opera parties, from any of which his absence would have ex-

cited comment. The entertainments bored him—so did the beautiful buds and the more seasoned roses.

"If I could I would like to cut Rah. Rittenhouse," said one audacious girl to another.

"But you can't, you know," returned the other, conclusively.

She was right; there was no girl dared offend him.

One evening a happy idea occurred to Mr. Rittenhouse—and he acted upon it immediately—to go to Caterpillar street before the more serious affairs for the night commenced. Thus he began to haunt 2013. Of course, he was admitted, especially as he took the precaution of always asking for Miss Green. During about half the time of his call they would have some lively discussion, and then Miss Hannah would leave abruptly, saying she "couldn't waste another minute, and Nancy might talk to him."

That young lady's moods were singularly changeable—sometimes warmly belligerent, some-

times coldly peaceful—still she found herself looking forward to these visits with keen enjoyment. In truth, Rahl was a very attractive man, and at no party, ball or grand dinner did he make such an effort to be agreeable as in Miss Hannah Green's plain little parlor.

Nancy's temper was quick, but not sullen; and among her Christian duties forgiveness was never a very hard one to perform. Now, for a time, she excused his conduct, forgave him freely, and, for one or two evenings, was the same blithe, winsome girl he had first known. But after a while she grew suspicious. Though so frequent a visitor at the house, he never happened to ask her to walk, or brought any of his friends to call. Nancy's pride awoke, and she determined to give his friendship a trial before accepting it.

"Why don't you bring your Cousin Maude to see me?" she asked him one evening early in March. "I am very much alone, and now that Edith is not coming back, I don't know what I shall do."

"I'm sure she will be most happy," murmured Rahl.

"Well," said Nancy, "I would like to see her very much. Suppose you bring her next Thursday."

"She has an engagement, I know, for Thursday."

"Say Saturday, then."

"I will be in New York on Saturday."

"Well, you choose the day. When shall it be?"

Mr. Rittenhouse actually hemmed and hawed before he answered. "I never can count on Maude, she is so busy; and this Lent all the girls are doing parish work, you know, and that takes lots of time."

"Very well," said Nancy, who had formed an opinion during that short time, "very well—we had better leave it indefinitely in the future."

No amount of your most fascinating conversation can affect Miss Nancy now, Rahl, for she has formed an opinion; she has decided that

your friendship is not worth having, and that you shall come no more to see her. Such a mighty conclusion to arrive at in so short a space of time!

A woman's brain works faster than a man's, and it was only on his way home that it occurred to Rahl to wonder whether she suspected anything of his unwillingness to make an engagement for Maude, which he knew very well he could never persuade her to fulfil. He had to evade a good many questions as to why he was seen so often crossing Market street.

"A man must walk, and I'm tired of the same old houses," he explained, clumsily.

"Rahl," said Lamberton Coles, tapping him on the shoulder, "old boy, you're keeping something back. Let me have one look at her." Rahl shook off his friend's hand.

"Nonsense!" he said; "don't you know me better than that? Do you think I'd 'rush' an up-town girl?"

"You might rush her," said the world-wise

Mr. Coles. "I once loved a shop girl. But you'd never marry her; you have too much sense, Rahlie."

Mr. Rittenhouse started. Marry her! Would he dare? For the first time the idea of such a thing occurred to him. For a moment he hesitated. "You are right," he said, quietly; "I have too much sense to marry her."

Mr. Coles eyed him suspiciously, resolving to watch for proof of his conviction that Rahl had taken a fancy to some maid of low degree, and he determined to be prepared to assist him out of the difficulty at the right moment.

Mrs. Rittenhouse was worried about him, too' and, with her keen perception, she analyzed his symptoms, and decided there was a woman at the bottom of it. She was like a certain astute prime minister, who always exclaimed, when he heard of any trouble, "Who is the woman?"

Oh, these women, who rule us from the cradle to the grave; who guide every action of our youth; then, as manhood comes, how they torture

and bless our every hour; later, in middle life, it is the daughters who coax and wheedle their soft-hearted fathers; and, even in tottering, feeble old age, we cling to tiny, girlish fingers.

Mrs. Rittenhouse saw plainly that her daughter was not the favored one, and, as she had determined that Maude should marry her cousin, she felt a strong desire to find out who was interfering with her plan. She had not forgotten Nancy Jackson. A society woman does not forget a girl who receives as much attention as Nancy had on the occasion of her ball, and she had also seen how attractive she might be to a blasé society man. But when she heard of Nancy's retirement to Caterpillar street, she felt the danger to be passed; for certainly Rahl would never go there for a wife. Still, it was not impossible, so she gently sounded him. "What has become of that little Miss Jackson, who stayed with Edith Shew?"

Some place in the northern part of the city," he answered, languidly, though his pulses were beating quickly.

"You had rather a 'penchant' for her, Rahl," his aunt continued. "Why don't you call?" with a laugh, expressive of the absurdity of the idea.

He laughed, too. "T. F. U. T." was his mysterious response. Then, in a different tone, he asked: "Has Maude gone to church yet? I believe I'll go with her."

"Do go, you dear boy; its only a short walk to St. Mark's, and it will please Maude," replied Mrs. Rittenhouse, graciously, feeling perfectly sure that he had something to conceal, and that this was a blind.

The knowledge that both Coles and his aunt suspected him made Rahl redouble his vigilance in guarding his secret visits to 2013, and it also strengthened his determination to keep them up. Besides, he was growing anxious about Nancy; for Maria, with a wooden visage, had told him, on both his last calls, that "the ladies begged to be excused."

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. CHIVICK PLEADS.

ONE Saturday afternoon about the middle of March, Mrs. Chivick was putting the finishing touches to a most elegant visiting toilette. It consisted of a plum-colored satin dress tied back very tightly; a rich velvet mantle trimmed with heavy fringe, and a bonnet of satin with a mass of lemon-colored plumes at one side, tied with wide lace strings under her double chin. Just now she was putting her number seven hand into a number six glove.

"Em.," she remarked, in a determined tone, to that young lady, who was reading a sensational novel, "I'm a-going to see that Nancy Jackson." Much to her surprise, Em. made no opposition; but rather favored the idea.

"Well, ma, I'd just give her a piece of my

mind,—letting Dick spend his money and waste his time for nothing."

"Yes, he's been fooling round that girl since the first of January, and I don't believe she's give him an answer yet. I don't see what he's so fascinated by, any way; she hasn't got half the style of you and Mame, and I'm sure she wasn't a bit lively the night of the *musicale*."

"Why, ma, he's just crazy about her, and she's led him on, too; you just give her a piece of your mind."

"Dick," returned Mrs. Chivick, "is that peevish and restless there's no living with him. I'm out of patience with her, and I'm going to tell her we're tired of this shilly-shallying, and just to come out and say yes, like a sensible girl."

"You're sure, ma, she'll take him?"

"Take him! she'll jump at him; but girls thinks its stylish to act so, and I'm not going to have it," marching out of the room.

Em. rather pitied Nancy; for, when roused, Mrs. Chivick was not a very pleasant person to deal

with. However, she had brought it on herself, and, with this comforting reflection, Em. returned to her novel.

When Mrs. Chivick's card was brought up, Nancy very naturally supposed it was meant for her aunt; but Miss Hannah was busy making a report for one of her societies, and refused to go.

"No," she said, shortly, "I won't see her."

"Oh, but auntie, they've been so kind."

"Nancy, I will not leave this important business to talk to an illiterate woman. I wish the Chivicks would stop coming here all the time; they're trying to persuade me to employ Dr. Bolter, and I won't trust my life to any empty-headed young doctor. I can see through their designs. Emma wants my coral jewelry, and she shan't have it. I'd sooner leave it to an orphan asylum."

Nancy could not help laughing at her vehemence. "It's a shame to say they are designing."

"I'm going to leave everything to you—everything except an annuity for Maria. I meant the

silver to be your wedding-present. Oh, if I could only lay my hands on that viper!"

This was the subject Nancy did not want Miss Hannah to think about, as she always grew so excited. "Well," she exclaimed, "if you're anxious to get rid of me, I'll accept the first offer I get," and ran down stairs.

"You'll have to put up with me, Mrs. Chivick," she said, sitting down by her. "Aunt Hannah is too busy to see any one."

"How is she?"

"She's nearly all right now, but not quite so strong as she was."

"It's real hard on you, Miss Nancy, having been shut up in a sick room so long."

"Oh, it wasn't tiresome at all; Aunt Hannah and I are great cronies."

Mrs. Chivick felt that this was an excellent opening, and resolved to take advantage of it.

"It's very amiable in you to talk that way; but naturally you want to be looking around a little for yourself. Down in the country I don't sup-

pose you ever see any one, and this trip to Philadelphia may be of great service to you."

Nancy was smiling. "My dear Mrs. Chivick, you make a great mistake about Berkeley. In summer it is crowded with the very nicest people, and I have made a great many friends among them, both girls and men."

There was a pitying tone in Mrs. Chivick's voice, as she answered: "My dear child, don't you believe a word those fine city men say to you. Like as not they flatter you, and give you promises; but they don't mean nothing by it. Don't you trust them."

"Mrs. Chivick, I have never allowed any man to flatter me, or make promises." Nancy flushed rather angrily.

Mrs. Chivick patted her kindly. "Don't take offence when there's none meant; but the truth is, it's time you thought about getting married. You're eighteen, ain't you?"

"Yes, I'm nineteen," said Nancy, feeling Mrs. Chivick was rather impertinent; but she con-

quered her impatience, and said, smiling, "Yes, I'm nineteen; but I'm not going to think of marrying for a great many years."

Mrs. Chivick drew a breath of relief; she felt her task would be easier than she had imagined.

"That's the way all girls talk, and it's so foolish; it's seldom a girl has the chance of getting a good, moral, steady young man, and when she's got the chance, my advice is to take him." Nancy began to see the drift of her visitor's conversation, and when Mrs. Chivick continued, knowingly, "Dick once said you thought Chivick was a prettier name than Jackson," she almost burst out laughing; but she knew this would offend her visitor, so she refrained.

"Yes, I did say so one night."

"Nancy," burst out Mrs. Chivick, "my boy's just wild about you; he just worships the ground you walk on, and if you'll only take him, you'll live like a queen. He's eating out his heart for you, and I can't stand it no longer." Mrs. C.

made a face, and tried to swallow her tears. "If needs be," she continued, seeing Nancy's face did not soften, "I'd go down on my knees to plead for him; for I ain't got no pride where my children's concerned."

"It's hopeless, Mrs. Chivick. I told your son so, and he agreed to be my friend," said Nancy, feeling for the first time how serious a matter it was, and how cruel her conduct must seem.

"A girl hasn't no right to lead a young man on, and then tell him they'll be friends." Poor woman! she found it harder work each moment to keep her temper. "And you've sense enough to know that a young man don't want his love to be his friend; my boy don't want no pity." Nancy began to feel very guilty. Mrs. Chivick continued, in an aggrieved tone: "And it's just the thing to make a young man turn to drink or gambling or low company."

"I'm sure that won't happen in his case; he's too good."

If Dick once took to bad ways he'd go

straight to the dogs; for he's awful set when once he takes a notion. His father and I was hoping he'd be immersed soon; but now I suppose we must give that up."

"You're Baptists, I believe."

"Yes, Mr. Chivick's an elder; and if only Dick would come out and profess religion, I'd be willing to die to-morrow. You don't know what it is for a mother to see her only son just wild after a thing, and she not able to give it to him. And he don't eat nothing, and looks just dreadful. He's losing flesh so fast his clothes hangs on him like bags; his eyes is red most of the time, and I know he don't sleep well o' nights." Mrs. Chivick had recourse to her handkerchief.

Poor Nancy felt overcome with remorse; the tears came in her eyes. "I'm so sorry! so sorry!"

Mrs. Chivick rose to go, and as they walked out in the entry, she laid her hand on Nancy's shoulder and said, impressively, "I don't bear no malice to you, Nancy; for I'm a church member,

and act up to my profession; but it goes against the grain to forgive you."

There was a loud peal from the front door bell; when Maria opened it there stood Rahl Rittenhouse.

"Is Miss Nancy at home?"

Maria turned to her young mistress, who stood in full view. "Miss Jackson is not at home," she said, in her clear, full voice.

"Will you give Miss Green this card, please?" he continued, apparently thinking Maria had just spoken; for he exclaimed: "Beg pardon, Miss Jackson," as he came in.

A ray of conviction shone into Mrs. Chivick's mind under the satin bonnet and Thompson wave. This was her son's rival, one of the "city men" whose fulsome flattery overshadowed Dick's more sterling qualities. She resolved to stay and see just how matters stood. Nancy was naturally placed in an awkward position; she guessed what Mrs. Chivick thought, and wondered what Rittenhouse would think after a few minutes should

give Mrs. Chivick an opportunity to display her conversational skill. The ludicrous side struck her, and she smiled broadly, as she presented Mr. Rittenhouse to Mrs. Chivick. That lady maintained a haughty aspect; she wished to petrify this giddy butterfly of fashion.

"I hope your aunt is better," said Rahl, in his easy way.

"Yes," returned Nancy, "she is on the road to recovery. Aunt Hannah does hate being sick; and then she worries so about the silver. She was grieving over it just before I came down to see you, Mrs. Chivick—said she had intended it for my wedding-present."

Nancy was talking now more for the sake of filling the awkward silence than for anything else; but to Mrs. Chivick this last remark savored of throwing herself at the young man's head.

"It's very few girls—I mean young ladies—that gets the chance of marrying at all; young ladies is so extravagant nowadays that the young gentlemen can't afford to marry 'em, though

they're willing enough to flatter 'em. Ain't that so?" appealing to the only "young gentlemen" present.

Nancy perceived the hidden meaning in this, and wondered what Rahl would say.

Mr. Rittenhouse had taken Mrs. Chivick's measure—to use a vulgar expression—so he answered accordingly: "There's no doubt," with a courteous little inclination of the head, "that there is a great deal of truth in that; but you must bear in mind how expensive all our living is now; for instance, your mantle is made of the costliest velvet; a few years ago queens only could boast of such wraps."

This went right to Mrs. Chivick's heart; her face beamed, and she cast a gratified look on the long mantle, when suddenly an angry frown darkened her brow; there stood Darnit giving contented little tugs at her fringe, probably more at home than since he left his rugs in Baltimore. One gentle reminder from her rather substantial foot, and the little dog was sent almost down the cellar steps.

"Nasty thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Chivick, examining the damages; "he's tore a lot of my fringe, and it can't be bought in Philadelphia."

Nancy bit her lips to keep back the smiles, picked up well-meaning but troublesome Darnit and patted him gently as she condoled with his victim. This last was a hard task; they grew red in the face stooping over to pin it on; the Thompson wave slipped slightly to one side, and the lemon plumes nodded vigorously.

"Come in the parlor," said Nancy. This suggestion being acted upon, the greater part of the mischief was soon rectified.

"Dogs is the most trying animals," said Mrs. Chivick, holding her head up very high, regardless of the crooked front. "When Dr. Bolter, my daughter's husband, was waiting on Mame, he gave her one of them big china dogs—so much better than a live one, and so much nicer round the house. I don't want you to think, Mr. Rittenhouse, that I mind having a little fringe tore off, though I was provoked at the time. If I

wanted, I could go right down town and buy a new lot of trimmings, and Mr. Chivick wouldn't fret about the bill. Mr. Chivick ain't close where I'm concerned; but children's awful expensive, and when a young man's got a girl in his head, it's wonderful how he can make money fly. Why, for the Charity Ball Dick paid upwards of fifteen dollars for a bouquet."

Nancy felt herself grow red, and, what was worse, she saw that Rahl had noticed it. In a desperate sort of way she tried to change the subject. "How interesting those immersions must be, at your church," she said to Mrs. Chivick.

Rahl was absently gazing out of the window. But this big flounder would not bite at her tiny bait. Her mind instantly traveled back to her son. "If only Dick would take care of his cold," she said, mournfully. "He ain't wore no overcoat this winter. He says it ain't stylish."

"No overcoat!" exclaimed Nancy, feeling this sacrifice was for her sake.

"None, excepting one of them short ones,"

disdainfully eyeing Rahl's, of the latest London cut, "that don't protect his legs," rising and kissing Nancy. She shook hands with Rahl, asked him to call on Em., which invitation he warmly accepted, and then departed, feeling she had done a good afternoon's work.

"Nancy's amusement had given place to anger. She resolved to show Rahl that he was not to come again.

Mr. Rittenhouse, on his part, was fully aware of the bold thing he had done in coming in, and resolved to be as agreeable as possible. "What a comfort," he exclaimed, as they reseated themselves, "that benevolent colossus has departed; such people ought to be suppressed."

"Mr. Rittenhouse," said Nancy, in a severe tone, "Mrs. Chivick is an old friend of my aunt's, and I wish you would not speak of her in that way."

"Forgive me."

"And another thing I didn't like," continued Miss Jackson, "was the way you laughed at her.

I don't think it was respectful to me, to say the least."

"Forgive me," repeated Rahl, pleasantly, feeling how delightful it was to have her scold him. His easy tone exasperated her.

"That's what you always say," she exclaimed; "you think you can say or do anything to me, provided you tack on that convenient little 'Forgive me.'" She stopped suddenly, being a little ashamed of her vehemence.

"Miss Nancy," asked Rahl, "I know you used to detest me; am I making any advances in your favor?"

"None," shortly returned Nancy.

"Well, as I am interested in the subject, I should like to know your opinion of me."

"I have no opinion of you," was the ambiguous answer.

Rahl condescended to show a little temper. "Well, if such is the case, I don't see how you can let me come here all the time."

"I do not press you to come Mr. Rittenhouse,"

said Nancy, whose own temper was at a white heat.

"How could you let me come in this evening, if that's the way you feel ?" he said, foolishly pressing the point.

"I did not let you; you forced your way in."

"And when I come you treat me like a dog."

"The remedy is in your own hands, Mr. Rittenhouse," said she, with apparent coolness; "you can leave."

In a moment's time Rahl had left, and never before had he been so angry. He struck a dog, that came too near him, furiously, with his cane, and cursed a beggar boy who prayed for a few pennies. But soon his anger passed into jealousy, and his love burned fiercer and fiercer. He thought of the man who had been with her at the Charity Ball, and whom he had seen with her once or twice on the street, and the unerring conviction took possession of him that Furness Latrobe was his rival.

He passed seven days of the utmost wretched-

ness; then he could no longer resist the temptation to tell some one, so he went to his friend Lamberton Coles. That gentleman lived in rooms of the utmost elegance and comfort, on Walnut street, and when Rahl came in, late the next Saturday night, he was enjoying a good cigar and a hot whiskey punch, before his fire.

"Say, old boy, what's the matter? Has Maude eloped with the coachman? Take a cigar and make yourself at home."

In truth, Rahl was a forlorn object. He was white and haggard; his dark eyes had a desperate look in them, and there was a want of finished care in his costume.

"Lam," said he, "I'm in an awful mess, and I want your advice."

Mr. Coles looked grave. Rahl was not in the habit of asking for advice. He decided that his suspicions had come true, and that he must help him out of this scrape.

"Out with it," he said, mixing some punch for Rahl, who sat down opposite him.

"Oh, Lam!" exclaimed Mr. Rittenhouse, pounding the table with his clenched fist until the glasses rattled, "I'll go crazy if this keeps on much longer; I can't stand it."

"Yes, old boy," soothingly, handing him the punch; "she's up-town, isn't she?"

"She lives on Caterpillar street; but I'd marry her to-morrow."

"Keep cool—keep cool. What's her name?"

"Jackson," returned Rahl, on whom the punch was having a quieting influence.

"Jackson, of Caterpillar street," repeated Mr. Coles, reflectively. "Don't believe I know the party. What's the old man—butcher?"

"Hang it, Lamberton, you do know her; she stayed with Edith Shew, and had a great deal of attention at my aunt's ball."

Mr. Coles' face brightened; he drew a breath of relief. "Then she's not a native of Caterpillar street. You're sure it's not a passing fancy, old boy?"

"You know, Coles, I never have passing fancies,

as you do. This is serious, and if I don't get her, I'll go to the devil, as sure as fate."

"Steady! steady! Rahlie; I have an idea. If you're sure that you're in earnest, with a great deal of care it may come right. In June, when every one's out of town, you can marry her very quietly; then go to London—anything American in the way of girls takes there—so you can let her get in with the toniest set; then in two or three years bring her back, make her keep her mouth shut about Caterpillar street, and get Mrs. Rittenhouse to bring her out. Exert all your family influence, and there you are—all right! What do you say to that?" Much to his surprise Rahl's face did not brighten. "Or else," he added, sarcastically, "you might take a little house up town, and become a caterpillar yourself."

"The trouble is, Coles," said Rahl, a little unsteadily, "she cuts me on the street, and asked me to leave the house."

His friend looked puzzled, as well he might;

for he could not conceive of any girl, much less an up-town one, who would not jump at Rahl.

"Why, it's more complicated than I thought it was. What's she got to make her stuck up?"

"She's proud—proud as a Picot," using an old Philadelphia proverb.

"If you want me to help you, you'd better tell me the whole story," settling himself patiently to listen.

Rahl rose from his chair and began to pace up and down the room, with his hands in his pockets.

"Well," he commenced, "I met her when she was at the Shews. She's from West Virginia. I paid her a lot of attention—told her I'd send her the Assembly Book, and asked her to take a walk with me after she left the Shews, and then I found out where she was going, and I determined to cut her, and I did—refused her the book and didn't go walking with her. Like a fool, I wouldn't speak to her at the Charity. I didn't care whether she was angry or not. Then I met her on the street one day; she slipped in the

mud, and I helped to pick her up; and again, like a fool, I took her home, and went in and spent the evening; and after that I tell you it was hopeless. Though she showed she hated me, I kept going to the house and made a friend of her aunt. Then last Saturday I went there. She refused to see me, and I forced my way in. There was an awfully common-looking woman there. I made fun of her when she went. Nancy was furious, and told me I could leave. I did, and since then she cuts me on the street. I know that Baltimore man—Latrobe—is at the bottom of it. I'd like to shoot myself; for I've no chance."

"Well, old boy, I can't say that sort of conduct is just the kind to win a girl. So she's the one Latrobe comes over to see. When I was in Baltimore I heard them say he meant business."

"What a fool—what a fool I've been," groaned Rahl, still marching up and down the room. "Is there anything I can do, Lam.?"

Mr. Coles felt alarmed; he had never seen Rittenhouse in such an abject state before, and he

was fearful of the consequences. Though the case looked hopeless to him, he could not help trying to give him a little encouragement.

"You wait a week or two," he said, "and give her a chance to feel sorry. A woman always gets sorry, sooner or later. Watch Latrobe's movements; that's all you can do."

"Is there anything I can send her?"

"No, nothing; she would take it as an insult. I say, Rahlie, make your aunt call on her."

A faint smile came on the other's woe-begone face. "I'd like to see any one make her," he said.

"Well," returned Coles, who felt this was a bright idea, "tell her you'll do anything—marry Maude even—if she'll only do it."

"No, I don't want her to get wind of it, and, besides, I'd rather be hanged than marry Maude. If I can't get Nancy I won't marry any one."

"That's," said Mr. Coles, rubbing his hands together, "that's only a ruse; for you've treated your ladylove very shabbily, and I don't blame

her for ordering you out of the house. She must have a good deal of nerve, though, to do it. What's her charm, anyway?"

"You would say it was her temper if you could hear her talk to me; but I don't know what it is."

"Well," said Coles, seeing Rahl was about to depart. "That's what you do—watch them; but don't you go near her."

Mr. Coles sat there by the fire a long time after Mr. Rittenhouse had left, thinking over the conversation he had just had. He was rather fond of philosophizing. "It's a queer world," he said to himself. "Think of Rahl Rittenhouse being bagged by an up-town girl; it's a judgment on him, poor old fellow—he's got it bad—pleasant surprise for his family. I don't see the faintest hope for him. Anyway, I'll do my best for him." And so his thoughts flowed on, the fire burnt low, the room grew chilly, and Mr. Coles retired for the night.

CHAPTER IX.

A THEATRE PARTY.

"RAHL," said Mrs. Rittenhouse, one Saturday morning, as she and her nephew sat together at luncheon, "if you have no very particular engagement for this evening I would like you to go with us to the theatre. Maude invited Mr. Cadams, so I bought a stall."

Mrs. R. having spent the summer abroad some ten years before, had not been able to reaccustom herself to calling things by their American names, and indiscriminately spoke of all theatre boxes as "stalls."

It must be explained that Mr. Cadams was the sallow-"complected" youth upon whom Maude's fickle affections had lately fastened.

"I have no engagement," Rahl answered, slowly, as though he would have given any

reasonable sum of money if he could truthfully have said he had.

And so it happened that when Nancy and Latrobe entered the theatre that same evening, Rahl, in his aunt's box, gave a start of surprise at so unexpectedly seeing the familiar little figure whose image was now constantly in his thoughts.

It had taken a tedious exercise of Nancy's sweetest persuasive powers to lead Aunt Hannah into the belief that to see Irving and Terry was a necessity to the higher development of youth. The estimable lady was wont to look upon all places of amusement as fitted up and furnished by the evil one for the exhibition of his most artistic temptations; but at last she yielded when an appeal was made to her great hobby—the highest development of the female mind. The pleasure of having been permitted to enter one of these Satanic temples having been obtained with such difficulty, Nancy came fully prepared to enjoy it.

In a few minutes she was entirely absorbed in the performance, which had commenced just as

they reached their seats in the parquet. Rahl's eyes had never moved from her face; he watched it untiringly, from the position he had taken, with his back to the stage. Not for all the plays in Christendom would he have lost a single instant's sight of that dear face. He had been hungering in vain to see it; for after his last stormy interview he dared not trespass where he had been ordered to leave. It had been a severe blow to his pride, yet he could calmly reflect now that the provocation had been sufficient to warrant such an order. He felt, rather bitterly, too, that his spirit had been broken, and he could almost have humbled it further by asking permission to return; but how could he find a chance to ask anything? Yes, he could have asked anything—done anything—to escape the suffering he now endured; whole nights he had walked the floor, with that haunting, intangible face ever before him, mocking him with merry smiles, or with such a grieved look in the beautiful eyes that he cursed his unkindness.

And now, when he could gaze unrestrainedly, should anything prevent him?

When the curtain fell and Nancy turned enthusiastically to Latrobe, she suddenly caught sight of the party in Mrs. Rittenhouse's box, and met Rahl's intent gaze upon her. She could read him now like a book. She knew very well that he was in love with her—knew the jealousy of his passionate disposition hidden under such a cool exterior, and the pride that kept him from becoming her acknowledged lover. This last thought always wounded her to the quick; but at last she saw an opportunity for a little provoking revenge, and she took it. All the coquetry in her nature came gleefully to the surface. From that moment till the end of the play she made poor, innocent Furness wildly happy by all manner of charming witcheries. She smiled gayly at his poorest speeches, glanced up at him sweetly to ask the simplest questions, or laid her hand for an instant appealingly on his arm, to call his attention here or there. Rahl bit his lip with

savage vexation, as he saw Latrobe, thus encouraged, lean very often toward the dainty ear to whisper some tender nothing; he knew it must be love-sick nonsense, else why should Nancy flush so prettily and laugh with such shy consciousness each time. After that first act she lost herself no more with the players; for not one instant did she forget whose eyes were watching her; not an actress on the mimic stage before them played her part with more skill than inexperienced Nancy.

As the curtain finally went down on both dramas—the one before and the other behind it—Latrobe suggested that they should celebrate their emancipation from Miss Green's tyranny by taking supper. No objection being raised to this proposition, they were soon seated at one of the small *tête-à-tête* tables in the Bellevue restaurant. The waiter had taken the order, and Nancy was just pulling off her gloves, when the door opened, and Mrs. Rittenhouse entered, in her stately, imposing style; then followed Maude, with her sallow

retainer; lastly, Rahl himself. Nancy looked at him deliberately—no sign of recognition on her face, though her heart beat loud and fast, as she turned, with a laughing response, to Latrobe's gay speech. They sat down, the Rittenhouse party so near that all their remarks could be overheard. Nancy had still further opportunity to keep up her clever bit of acting, and taking advantage of the silence which followed their arrangement at the table, she leaned towards Latrobe to say, in her low, clear voice, as though continuing a previous conversation, "Yes, indeed, I was wretchedly unhappy till you came back from the West."

Crash! went a glass of water on their neighbors' table.

Mrs. Rittenhouse jumped with more agility than grace from her chair. There is a time for ease of manner and a time—less time in this case—to save a brand new Ottoman silk.

"Rahl, you awkward man! how did you do that?" she exclaimed angrily, her face unbecomingly red.

Rahl's was white and set, as he gravely apologized for "the accident."

"Accident, indeed!" wrathfully echoed his aunt; "great accident to go jogging your elbows all over the table."

The two amused spectators put their heads together. "Miss Nancy," whispered Latrobe, "those are the Rittenhouses, 'the nobility of the land,' according to my lady's definition of her pedigree."

Nancy smiled; but her excitement was on the wane. That glass of water had been the climax, and now she wanted only to escape the gaze of her limited audience. Besides, she was mortified that the Rittenhouses should have seen her there, in a restaurant, with a gentleman and unattended by a chaperon. To her Southern mind the many formalities governing the intercourse between girls and men in Philadelphia were very perplexing; but she had been informed early in her visit that, no matter how lively the chaperon or how recently made one, her presence was the one

thing necessary for propriety's sake. She hoped and prayed Maude had not noticed her. Mrs. Rittenhouse was too near-sighted, and she believed Mr. Cadams too stupid to remember her. In spite of such uncomfortable speculations she ate her supper leisurely, and kept the talk running pleasantly during their long ride home through the silent streets; so that when they arrived at 2013 Caterpillar street, Latrobe vowed, in his hearty way, that it was the jolliest evening he had ever spent.

"Won't you come in?" Nancy said, as he opened the door with Miss Green's latch-key; "it's early."

"Of course I will," he answered, "unless you think Aunt Hannah may mistake me for another burglar, and assail me with her trusty weapon."

"Why, you forget; it was I who fired that pistol, and I object seriously to the credit being given to any one else."

A prolonged and dismal howl made itself heard at this point; then the rattling crash of im-

provised ammunition. Nancy turned pale, and grasped Latrobe's arm.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a breath of relief, "I know what it is. Some one throwing things at Darnit."

"What things?" asked he, as they both started to open the back door.

"Why, empty cans and boxes—sometimes inkstands—and one old lady threw her rubber shoes the other night, and in the morning, when she came for them, she told Aunt Hannah if that 'purp' wasn't kept in the house she'd have us arrested for harboring a nuisance."

"And, pray, why don't you keep him in the house? I'm sure it's no fun for him being hit by every old dragon's No. 9 shoes. It's a wonder that the first pair didn't knock him into eternity."

"But Aunt Hannah won't have him in the house; he's to keep off burglars, and he has a nice big box, with straw; but he won't stay in it, but just howls and whines all night."

"Come here, old fellow," said Latrobe, stoop-

ing, kindly, to address poor shivering Darnit; "let me see how many battle-scars you bear. Here's a big one, Miss Nancy, that must have come from somebody's scraper."

"It did," Nancy returned, mournfully. "That's Mrs. Chivick's autograph; she kicked him all the way down the entry for chewing her fringe."

"The wretch!" exclaimed Latrobe, savagely. "But, Darnit, old boy, they don't seem to treat you as a gentleman of your luxurious habits is accustomed to being regarded, and it strikes me we'd better both go home to Baltimore."

Darnit stopped quivering to wag his tail, with an intelligent yelp of delight.

"But," protested Nancy, "I want him, and you gave him to me to keep."

"Well, then, as I want him badly, there's only one way to make a satisfactory arrangement—take me to keep, too."

Nancy laughed. "In the yard?"

"No; in your heart. Darnit considers that an excellent place. Look at him. See how his ears

and tail have assumed the perpendicular to catch your lightest whisper. Which is it? Shall we go or stay? Listen, Darnit."

"But how can I tell you both want to stay?" smiled Nancy.

"Why, see. Darnit proves his desire; for he has climbed into your lap, and I, little one,"—all the fun dying out of his voice—"I love you too dearly ever to want to go."

Nancy jumped up regardless of Darnit's downfall, and wildly debated whether to laugh or cry, or, better still, to run. She honestly liked Latrobe, and if a vague suspicion ever crossed her mind that this scene would sometime occur, she put it away from her to enjoy the present.

"I don't love him as I ought," she now said to herself, "and how can I tell him so?" It was a very different thing to manage poor quaking little Dick; but Latrobe was so big and manly.

Nancy felt him take her hands in his—heard him whisper, "Darling, I didn't mean to frighten you," and her face crimsoned as she remembered

all the encouragement she had given him. Something in her drooping head gave Latrobe an idea of what was passing in her mind. "If you are not quite sure, little one," he said, turning her face upwards, gently, till the gray eyes looked full into his own; "if you are not quite sure you like me, I can wait."

The face so loving and tender, the smile so sweet and grave, the gentle hand, all seemed to carry Nancy out of herself, and to make of her a better, more worthy girl. "I am sure," she cried, impulsively; and she felt sure, as the strong arms were folded round her, and the kiss that sealed her betrothal pressed on her lips.

Oh, Nancy, with that noble fellow's heart beating so near your own, how could your wicked thoughts turn to another? How could you think, with just a little sigh, of how another man would have told the old sweet story? How can you wonder whether you would not have been happier had that some one else taken you in his arms?

Nancy cut short her ruminations with a little

moral shake; she had plighted her troth, and no other man should come into her head. But, oh, dear! she didn't want to give Rahl up just as she was beginning to enjoy their little battles. A bright idea came to her. "I'm engaged now, I suppose?" looking up at Latrobe, archly.

He laughed. "Well, I should just think you were."

"Then will you grant me a favor, engaged man? Mind, you don't dare refuse my first, and you musn't ask any embarrassing questions." Nancy's eyes sparkled, as she went bravely on: "I don't want any one to know of this little transaction between us until summer time, when you come to see me at Berkeley. After that you may tell any one you want. Will you promise not to tell?"

"It shall be always as my lady wills." With true Southern gallantry he bent over her little hand, and Nancy—scheming Nancy—felt a little shame creep up in her heart; but she put it down as she softly caressed the curls on the bowed head.

"You know," she said, feeling some explana-

tion was due even to such blind submission, "I had to come to an understanding with Dick Chivick; and his mother—well, she's rather made up her mind that I've got to marry him. I'm afraid she might wax a little wroth if she heard of you." Nancy shivered; down in her heart she really had a wholesome dread of Mrs. Chivick.

The excuse was excellent. Furness laughingly promised to keep the secret from all save his immediate family, and, with a reluctance only natural under the new circumstances, at last tore himself away.

Oh, Nancy! Nancy! What would he have thought had he heard those stifled sobs and seen the big tears on your pillow? Never let his great heart be wounded by the knowledge of how you spent that first night of your betrothal; never let him know that you dared weep and moan because, in his stead, Rahl Rittenhouse had not asked for your love; but kneel and pray, as you knelt and prayed that night, for grace, till, with truth in your eyes, you can look your lover bravely in the face and honestly say: "I am sure!"

CHAPTER X.

AN AFTERNOON WALK.

CHESTNUT street was thronged with its customary Sunday promenaders the next afternoon, when Nancy and Latrobe started on their usual walk. Young and old—but principally young—had turned out in force to enjoy the clear, fresh air, that brought the color tingling into pretty cheeks—made bright eyes sparkle and merry tongues rattle, as the belles and beaux of gallant Philadelphia jostled each other briskly on this favorite walk.

Daylight was just melting into dusk when at last our two friends turned to retrace their steps. Many people were taking a little jaunt to stretch their stiffened members after listening to an hour's discourse in church. Such ones walked energetically, as though rather glad than otherwise

that their Sunday duties were over; and, judging from many a sleek, well-fed face, one would say that the flesh was stronger than the spirit.

Suddenly, Nancy burst in on Latrobe's cursory description of the passing people: "Oh, dear! my boots are killing me!"

"I'm awfully sorry, darling. We must ride the rest of the way home, and why didn't you tell me sooner? New shoes, are they?" he asked, pityingly, as he noticed for the first time how her face was drawn with pain. There was no car in sight, and Nancy would not think of waiting. "Then," said Latrobe, decidedly, "you must take my arm. Why don't you throw such instruments of torture to the dogs—at them, would suit better the warlike tendencies of your neighborhood, though, wouldn't it?" he continued, as she obediently put her hand on his arm.

"But, you see, they are brand new, and I can't afford to waste them," looking ruefully at the trim little pointed toes. "Besides, you oughtn't to teach extravagance to a girl who expects to marry a poor man."

"Why, Nancy," he exclaimed, in the greatest surprise, "you don't believe I'm poor, do you?"

"Yes," she smiled.

Latrobe pressed her arm to his side in delight at this great proof of affection.

"Look!" he said, a few minutes later, "here comes a great Philadelphia swell—nice enough sort of fellow, barring his conceit."

Nancy withdrew her interest from the painful boots to glance at the individual in question. With a queer, breathless pause of her heart-beating, she saw Rahl raise his hat to Latrobe, but with such a strange expression on his handsome face as he met her eyes, that several seconds passed before she managed to say, quietly, "Yes, I know him."

"He was with the Countess Boyli, wife of the Italian Minister. Rittenhouse always prefers the high and mighty rulers of the universe. But isn't this woman now sailing down on us—the one in remarkable gear—a friend of yours? See how she scowls at me! Nancy, what have I done?"

"It's Mrs. Bolter, and she is not a friend of mine."

The answer was sharp, but her lover kindly laid it to the shoes, which he mentally consigned to a warmer climate; while Nancy, oblivious to everything, wondered if Rahl would think her engaged, seeing her hand in Latrobe's arm, and whether she would have an opportunity soon to tell him about her new shoes; for Mr. Coles' prediction had come true, and she was heartily sorry for her sharp words of a few weeks back, and very anxious to make up, provided she would not have to sacrifice her dignity. Of course, Mrs. Bolter would take the news home; but Nancy did not care very much for that, except she did rather dread the remarks Mrs. Chivick would be sure to make.

Home reached and the instruments of torture discarded for dainty little slippers, she felt enough better to enter gayly into Latrobe's mood when he caught Darnit up in his arms, and solemnly addressed that trembling creature: "Your name

shall no more be called Darnit, but Blessit, in grateful remembrance of the important part played by you in the great act of two lives. Oh, Nancy! sweetheart!" he cried, impulsively, breaking off his little speech, "with Heaven's blessing, I mean to make you eternally glad of the promise you gave me last night."

The door bell pealed out merrily to an impatient hand; then followed the usual dialogue with Maria: "Yes, Miss Nancy was in." "Alone?" "Oh, no; there was a gent with her." Maria here flung open the parlor door to substantiate her statement of "the gent," and Mr. Rittenhouse appeared on the threshold.

When Rahl arose that same lovely Sunday morning, he had no more idea of calling on Nancy than have you or I. He knew he would see her some time; but it might not be until he found himself at Berkeley, in the summer, where he had fully determined to go; but when he met her that afternoon, with her arm in Latrobe's, he felt that he must go to her at once—must learn

the worst, if she were engaged; and if not, tear her away from this man, who was trying to win her from him. He thought he should go mad with the jealousy that was raging and burning in his heart. The heat of his passion gradually cooled as he neared the house on Caterpillar street, and it was not without some slight trepidation he mounted the steps and quickly pulled the bell. It was only when he entered the parlor that he felt some explanation of his reappearance was necessary after their last stormy interview, and, as by inspiration, he hit upon a plausible excuse.

"I trust, Miss Jackson," he began, bravely telling his lie, "you will pardon my intrusion; but I heard you thought of returning to Berkeley, and I was determined you should not leave without a farewell visit from me."

Nancy graciously listened to this obvious fabrication—all the while her heart was beating wildly in glad unison to the thought that he had come back at last. He had sacrificed his pride to return and humbly—in deed rather than in word

—ask her pardon; so she meant to show she appreciated this effort and felt gratified by it.

"I am very glad you came to see me," she said, cordially, "although I have several weeks yet to spend in Philadelphia. I believe you and Mr. Latrobe are acquainted."

"Yes, we have met several times—loved and parted, too, haven't we, Rittenhouse?"

This interference from a third party brought back all Rahl's assurance; his embarrassment vanished, as he coolly returned the hearty greeting of this hated rival.

"You must have walked up pretty fast," continued that young man; "we haven't been here but a few minutes; and what did you do with the countess?"

"But, Mr. Latrobe, you know we strolled along very slowly, and we had a great deal farther to walk. You see," turning to Rahl, "my shoes were new and painful, so Mr. Latrobe kindly gave me his arm to lean on. Now," she thought, "after that he'll understand I'm not engaged."

And he did. How easy it is to doubt what we do not want to believe, and how many excellent reasons can be brought forward in proof of our desired way of thinking. Rahl felt now that he had been foolishly hasty in imagining there could be any serious relations between these two, just because he had seen them together a few times. No doubt Nancy liked him—why shouldn't she like a man who was so evidently attentive? But liking and loving were very different. She could like as many men as she pleased; she must love only him. And so with his thoughts turning into this pleasant channel, he began to feel like his old self—the contented, conceited, fascinating Rahl. Even Latrobe came within range of his genial humor, and they chatted gayly of mutual friends in Baltimore—of its reputation for beauty, in which Latrobe stoutly protested it should yield the palm to Philadelphia; while Rahl politely maintained the opposite. Nancy laughed right merrily at their funny arguments and witty criticisms till the supper-bell surprised them all with

its tale of the late hour. Rahl rose promptly to depart, refusing Nancy's cordial invitation to remain, feeling that it would only hurt his cause to again forget his dignity by staying. He was a politic man, this friend of ours, and knew, through a long-tried experience of fair ladies, that a certain amount of self-humiliating homage is a most flattering tribute; but when that limit is passed, and the homage becomes servility, then a man receives only their pity and contempt.

So Rahl gracefully acknowledged and regretted the kind invitation, desired his regards to be conveyed to Miss Green, and bowed himself into the the hall. There Nancy followed him, with a mischievous look in her gray eyes.

"Mr. Rittenhouse," she said, "as I am not returning immediately to Berkeley, I hope you will not think of allowing me to leave without a farewell visit from you."

Rahl turned and eagerly clasped the half-extended hand.

"Are we friends again?" he asked, in a hoarse voice.

"We never were."

"Then let us begin now, this very moment." Passionately, the next question came: "May I call soon?"

"My permission has seemed unnecessary thus far—perhaps you can still do without it."

Rahl looked at her. No tone in her voice betrayed aught but indifference; but there was a flush on her cheeks and the faint shadow of dimples, that proved Miss Jackson to be thoroughly enjoying this scene.

Some very strong feeling must have moved Mr. Rittenhouse, for he did what no one ever saw him do before—raise a lady's hand to his lips and kiss it—not gallantly, as befitted a courteous gentleman, but passionately—tenderly—as only a lover could.

Though the night was cold and chill for that time of year, Rahl several times wiped the moisture from his face as he walked homeward. This man, who had stood invulnerable to the fascinations of the most beautiful women, fell mortally

wounded by the bright eyes of this little country girl. He determined, with set teeth, as he strode along that Sunday night, to woo and win her, too. He no longer doubted that he could. Doubt it! Rahl laughed. How could any one—least of all himself—doubt his success in any courtship? A cheerful evening with Coles and a night's perfect rest restored him to his old egotistical self-sufficiency.

For just one instant Nancy stood where he had left her, one soft cheek resting on her hand, where his lips had touched it; then she ran lightly up to her room, there to wash and rub it carefully, as from a stain.

Miss Hannah and Latrobe joked her a little about the long interview in the hall, and she wondered slightly how the latter—loving her so deeply—could fail to have some jealous feeling. But he was too true himself to doubt her. If any such natural sensation did trouble him, it was all dispelled when he heard Nancy say, with a toss of her proud little head, and in answer to a

criticism from Miss Green, "Yes, he is rather attractive; but too grandly superior to suit my taste."

The evening passed rapidly, as evenings are wont to do when spent in pleasant company.

"Write to me every day, Nancy," Latrobe was saying, as the clock politely told him it was time to go.

"But I shall have nothing much to write about."

"Then make the descriptions long," he laughed. "I will stay at home evenings particularly to read them. And now, little one, it is good-bye till next Sunday. Six days! What an eternity! It didn't take a day longer to make this whole world! Nancy," he said, breaking off suddenly, "tell me again you love me."

"Did I ever make such a bold assertion?" meditatively; "if so, it must have been in a moment of wild delirium; for watch the blush of maidenly reserve mount into my right cheek at the idea," pinching it as she spoke. "Any-

thing," she thought, "rather than tell him a story." She knew now which she loved the best; yet why did she not tell this kind-hearted fellow the mistake she had made? why not put the case plainly before him; he would be hurt and grieved, —perhaps heart-broken for a time—but he would soon get over it; all men do. And how much better that would be than to let him go on believing the lie she would have to spend her life acting. It would be kinder to herself, besides far, far kinder to him. Nancy looked up shyly in his face, at the loving eyes and firm, kind mouth. Once more that inexplicable feeling—that queer transport—seized her, and she softly returned his tender good-bye.

CHAPTER XI.

"GOOD-BYE, MISS NANCY."

THE next day Nancy announced her engagement to her aunt, and was greatly amused at her surprise. Though uncommonly keen in public matters, and able to tell the signs of the times most accurately, Miss Hannah was entirely ignorant of what transpired around her. She was very much pleased, and, in her kindly, brusque way, informed Nancy she was "doing well."

It was not long before Mrs. Bolter appeared on the scene, very important and sympathetic. Miss Hannah tried hard to parry her attacks; but when asked directly about it, of course she told the truth.

"When I saw she had his arm," said Mame, "I knew what had happened. I remember so well, when the doctor and I were first engaged, I

wouldn't take his arm for the longest time, I was that bashful."

"Nancy has too much sense to be bashful," returned Miss Hannah."

"You dear girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Bolter, as Nancy entered the room. "My, but you were sly about it."

Nancy smiled; Mrs. Bolter always amused her.

"I had not been engaged long when you saw me," she replied, knowing it was of no use now to deny it.

"He's so gentlemanly and has such elegant manners. I was very much pleased with him the night of the Charity Ball. I know just how you feel," in a tone of the most tender sympathy.

"Indeed you don't," said Nancy to herself.

"I guess the family will think it's hard on Dick," continued Mrs. Bolter; "but, as I said to the doctor, 'Fred.,' says I, 'just think of all the gentlemen I threw over to marry you.' Why, when I accepted the doctor's proposal there was one young gentleman I was actually afraid to

tell, and he took on awful—said he was going to cut his throat."

"What did happen to him?" inquired Nancy, politely.

"Oh, he went in the shoe business on Eighth street, and he's done splendid. I must say, though, I think a profession is more high-toned than a trade."

Much to Nancy's delight Mrs. Bolter was soon compelled to take her leave.

"Just stopped in a minute to congratulate you," she explained, as she departed in the direction of the Chivick's, brimming over with her news.

Mr. Rittenhouse paid two or three visits to 2013 this same week, and Nancy not only saw him, but made herself as bewitching as possible. When Rahl next encountered Mr. Coles that gentleman hardly knew him for the same man; he was so gay and jovial—so foolishly happy.

"I believe there's hope, Lam.," he cried. "And I intend to carry out your little idea, and when

we come back from Europe you shall dine with us every day, if you like. I will even let you be her german partner at her first Assembly."

"But what of Latrobe?"

"Oh, he's a kind of brother—no fear of him."

"Have a care, my boy," said Coles, gravely, not wishing Rahl to become too much elated. "That girl's dangerous. I wouldn't meet her for a hundred dollar bill. She's like tobacco—the more you have of her, the more you want;" and Mr. Coles smiled at his witty comparison.

The weather this spring was, to speak mildly, atrocious; one rainy day succeeded another, until at last a drizzle was hailed with delight, while a mist brought sunshine to many faces. One Sunday in the early part of April, when Latrobe came on from Baltimore, he found his little sweetheart more than ordinarily winsome. She had been shut up in the house for two or three days, and welcomed his cheerful presence as an interruption to the monotony.

Aunt Hannah was very thoughtful about the

lovers,—almost too much so, in fact,—for she insisted upon leaving them alone many a time when Nancy found the minutes pass too slowly. Now that the excitement of winning his love was over, these visits had lost something of their charm.

"What good care you take of yourself," she remarked, as he deposited his heavy arctics and big overcoat in the entry.

"That's for the old lady's sake. She presented me with those arctic explorers, and besought me to wear them. What are you going to sit by the window for? You won't see any one passing such an afternoon as this."

"Yes, in a few minutes, little Dick Chivick will, on his way to Sunday-school. You know he teaches the Bible-class, and, altogether, has grown awfully good. He never looks up at the house now, and never comes near me."

"That shows the infant has some sense. I hope he hasn't discarded the watch-chain with the other vanities of this world. It would make a splendid anchor for him in this gale."

"There he is!" she exclaimed.

And sure enough, a patient little figure was plodding along, trying to steady its umbrella against the wind.

Nancy ran to the door. "Mr. Chivick!" she called, "won't you come in and get dry? You will catch your death of cold."

Dick blushed crimson, as he halted in front of the steps. "I haven't time, Miss Nancy," he said. "It's Bible-class hour."

"You ought to have rubbers on and a heavy coat," continued Miss Nancy. "But I must not keep you standing in the rain. Why don't you come to see me sometime?"

"May I come after Sabbath-school?" he asked, timidly.

"Of course you may. Good-bye." Shutting the door, she returned to the parlor window. "He is not properly wrapped up," she said, as they watched him struggle on.

"They oughtn't to let him go out in such weather; he is too delicate to stand it," returned Latrobe.

Poor little Dick! All his resolutions never to see Nancy again, but to turn his thoughts to higher things, vanished at the sight of his idol's face. How he took himself to task, as he hurried on. When the church was reached he was obliged to wipe away a few tears called forth by his weak yielding to temptation. His little address, so carefully prepared, failed to produce its proper effect on the young men, owing to the many times he was compelled to interrupt the elaborate sentences with prolonged sneezes. But, though shaking and aching in every limb, he attended to his manifold duties bravely, and no one knew the great effort it cost him.

Meanwhile at 2013 time passed very pleasantly.

"Here is a letter mother wrote you," Latrobe said, handing it to her. It was full of the utmost kindness, and contained a warm invitation to visit them on her way home. "Won't you come?" he asked, eagerly.

Nancy smiled on him sweetly. "I am afraid you will get tired of me if I go. It would be

nice, though," reflectively, "to stay with your family; for, strange as it may seem, I rather like them."

"Thanks for the faint praise."

"Do you remember, Furness, that day I came on to Philadelphia?"

"Indeed I do."

"And do you remember how I wondered if I should be a success and have a nice time? It seems queer I thought of such a thing, for I haven't been a success—no one has taken any notice of me."

"You didn't have a fair chance. It was all the better for me, though."

"Furness, tell me. Did you ever once mind coming up to Caterpillar street?"

"No; the attraction was so great I never noticed the distance."

"You know that isn't what I mean; please tell me." Nancy was very serious.

"Now, surely, you don't think I am a snob?"

"No; and I wish I were good enough for you,

Furness. Do you know, I am sure I should have minded it."

He laughed at her continued earnestness.

"What left-handed compliments you pay. You must consider me a man of very little character. I think Caterpillar street is the nicest in town, and as for 2013—it's Paradise!"

"Would you have thought the same," rather hesitatingly, "if you had been a Philadelphian?"

"The very same, only then I might have done so much more for you. You are a brave little girl, Nancy, to have kept so bright all winter; for it must have been pretty dull. If your bad angel had not taken Edith Shew away, you might have been the gayest of the gay."

"I haven't been bright; but I *have* been cross and rude, and altogether horrid," she said, thinking of her quarrel with Rahl.

"Don't call yourself bad names, sweetheart. You have made two people at least very happy; one is Aunt Hannah, and I feel a delicacy about mentioning t' other."

So they talked on, now merrily, now gravely, and, almost before they knew it, some gossamer-clad figures notified them that Sunday-school was over. Before long there came a feeble little peal at the bell, which they both hastened to answer; and as Latrobe opened the door, Dick, shivering in unison with his chattering teeth, staggered into the entry.

"I'm so cold," he stuttered, trying to shake hands with Nancy in his usual way.

"He has a chill!" Latrobe said, steadying him.

"Go into the kitchen while I get some blankets," she said, running up-stairs

When she and Aunt Hannah came down, laden with blankets and whiskey, they found little Dick on the settee before the range. Though they wrapped him up, rubbed him and gave him whiskey, he only seemed to shiver more violently; so Latrobe went in search of Dr. Bolter.

It was some little time till that young gentleman arrived, as he had to wait for his carriage to be brought out. Dr. Bolter would no nothing

without the proper style. He said Dick must be taken home.

"Taken home! You're crazy!" cried Miss Hannah, who had not a grain of faith in his ability.

But Dr. Bolter insisted on removing him at once; and, bundled up in blankets, poor little Dick was carried out to the buggy and consigned to the tender mercies of his brother-in-law.

Now the days in April seemed to fly; for it was Nancy's last month in Philadelphia, and she had just begun to realize how dearly she loved the Quaker City—even Caterpillar street. The softest, tenderest feelings of her nature were being brought out by Dick's illness, which had proved most serious. When the trouble with his lungs improved, congestion of the brain set in, and together they were more than his frail body was able to stand. It soon became very evident that he could not live. All the vulgarity and noisy ways of Mrs. Chivick seemed subdued by this terrible affliction. Nancy saw her several

times, and was appalled by the change. Her manner was quiet, her voice low; she wore a plain dark dress, and the Thompson wave had been discarded.

About a week before the first of May Miss Hannah came home from a visit to the Chivicks.

"He's certainly dying," she said, nervously smoothing her gloves in her lap. "Mrs. Chivick says it's the will of God, and she don't complain. I can't see, Nancy, how people stand such trouble. There she sees him getting weaker every day, and the worst is his mind's going."

"Poor woman!" said Nancy, softly. "How truly good she must be."

Miss Hannah sniffed audibly, but made no comment.

During this time Nancy's only amusement was derived from her intercourse with Rahl Rittenhouse. It was a dangerous pastime; but she felt safe on her own account, and she thought, even if it did effect him—did singe his gay butterfly wings—it would do him more good than harm;

so, to tell the truth, she flirted desperately with him. This does not mean that she flattered his weak points and ignored his faults; that she made eyes at him, or in any way showed that he had excited more than a passing interest. It means simply that she allowed him to come to see her very often, Sundays excepted; that she listened to him, fought with him in a graceful, daring manner, and, in short, made him fall more hopelessly in love than ever. But she never permitted him to send her anything, not even flowers, and sometimes tortured him by wearing Latrobe's roses in his presence. She always slipped off her engagement ring before he came, and looked as innocent as a little child when he tried to sound her about Furness.

Thursday she was to leave Philadelphia, and this was Monday, when she sat for the last time in the little parlor with Mr. Rittenhouse.

"What a sad occasion this is," she remarked.

"But it isn't the last time I am to see you?" questioned Rahl. "Mayn't I come up Wednesday evening?"

"No," she returned, firmly, knowing Furness would be in town then to take her to Baltimore the next day. "I have an engagement that night, and you can't come to see me off, either. I hate to say good-bye."

"What would you think if I followed you to Berkeley? Would you treat me nicely?" This was a little feeler.

"Don't come before the first of June, because I won't be home until then. I am going to Baltimore."

A jealous pang shot through his heart at the ominous word Baltimore.

"Whom do you visit there?" he demanded, in a masterful tone.

Nancy drew herself up. "Excuse me, Mr. Rittenhouse, from answering any such question."

When Nancy took this attitude he always became humble immediately.

"Please don't let us quarrel to-night," he pleaded. "I'm awfully sorry."

"Well, for once in my life, I will be truly

amiable. Do you think any one will miss me?" a dangerous softness in her voice.

"Miss you!" he repeated, absently. "I don't know what I shall do without you. I wonder if you know what this winter has been to me."

Nancy felt they were approaching dangerous ground, so she quickly turned the conversation.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, "it makes me almost wild with joy when I think of being home again. And then there's my blessed Jack!"

"I believe you care more for that boy than for any one in the world."

"Of course I do. If you could only once see him you'd like him, too. He is such a thorough boy—bad, to be sure, but devoted to me."

"Naturally," returned Rahl, without much enthusiasm, for he had awful visions of Jack accompanying them in their rambles, and of his having to make love to him, too.

"You will like father; he has so many adventures to tell. Of course I know them all; but to

a stranger I can imagine their being quite interesting." Rahl saw himself listening to stupid yarns for hours at a time. "And you must certainly like Aunt Sallie," continued Nancy, maliciously, seeing his disgusted expression. "She is our old colored cook, and if you bring her a bright bandana she'll be your friend forever."

"But I don't care to make any friends," very stiffly.

"Then why are you coming to Berkeley?" in a most innocent tone.

"To see you, of course."

"Well, then, you must expect to meet all my family; for in my home we don't keep our family in the background."

Rahl perfectly understood this little insinuation; but, as he could not refute it, he prudently kept quiet.

"Oh, I am so rude!" said impulsive Nancy, penitently. "I do think you have the best temper of any one I ever met. Now, I'll tell you what we will do. You come to Berkeley about the

middle of June, and we can have a lovely time, walking, riding and sitting in the grove. What do you say to that?"

"It sounds delightful. If only there is no disagreeable third party."

"What a dreadful night it is; just listen to the rain."

"Yes," he answered; "but it is very cosy in here," a contented feeling stealing over him.

"Do you know," she said, in a confidential tone, "rain always has the most delightful influence over me. I love to walk in a steady drizzle, when I have my old clothes on. When I am indoors, and it's storming outside, it makes me sentimental."

"How sentimental?" drawing his chair a little closer.

"Well," leaning her head sideways, "my heart makes frantic little dives out into space for its vainly-sought mate. I begin to fancy all sorts of things as I listen to the patter. I wonder who he is and where he is, and—you can laugh, now!"—in an aggrieved tone, seeing him smile.

There was something so childlike in her simplicity that it charmed the world-worn man.

"And do you believe that at just the right moment he will come?" he asked, gently, wishing she would talk on.

"Yes, he will come—and then how we'll love each other."

"I envy that man," said Rahl, with more energy than the occasion called for. "I would give the world to be in his place!"

Conversation was again drifting into deep water, but the little pilot was equal to the need. "Oh, you couldn't fill the part of hero; you're not half tall enough, to begin with."

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed he. "How tall do you want him?"

"Seven feet at least," was her laughing rejoinder, "and very melancholy, with a fiery temper, and a habit of throwing boots at me—I mean, in my dreams."

"Pleasing combination; but if you like a man with a warm temper I can recommend one."

"They say people like their opposites; but it isn't so in this case, for I'm fiery myself. What is it, auntie?" for a hollow sound had come down the register.

"Be sure to bolt the front door."

They both laughed. This was Miss Green's neat little way of sending him home.

"Well," he said, "I suppose I must go. This isn't good-bye, Miss Nancy, but, as our German friends say, 'auf wiedersehen.'"

She put her small white hand in his, and he pressed it tenderly. Perhaps it was her pressure in return, though ever so slight, that prompted his next speech.

"When I come to Berkeley," he said, in a low voice, with a soft look in his dark eyes, "may I say things I dare not now?"

Her blushing face drooped. "Yes," she replied, confusedly, "but I may answer them, too."

Slowly, shyly she raised her eyes, then dropped them suddenly. In a moment's wild impulse he caught her in his arms and kissed her. "Auf

wiedersehen," he murmured, as he released her and left the house.

Nancy sank down on her knees and buried her face in the chair. For a moment her vows to Furness were forgotten, as she whispered, "I love him!—I love him!" But her emotion soon passed away and she began to upbraid herself, sorrowfully. "It was wrong," she whispered. But she was not yet ready to give up this delicious sin, so she stifled her thoughts with the plea that she would probably never see him again, and if he did come to Berkeley by the middle of June, she was sure she would be so completely in love with Furness that she would have nothing to fear. Even then she felt that in her heart she did not respect Rahl Rittenhouse, though she believed she loved him.

Next morning a note came from Em., saying they wished Nancy would call to see Dick before she left, as he asked for her so often. That same afternoon she went. Mrs. Chivick ushered her up into the sitting-room; then closed the door,

leaving her alone with Dick. Although it was a warm, sultry day, he lay back among his pillows, covered with shawls, a mere shadow of his former self. He had entirely lost the natty look that had distinguished him. Great preparations had evidently been made for this visit; for he wore his favorite light blue neck-tie, and Mrs. Chivick had brushed his hair in a faint imitation of its old, glossy smoothness. Some violets and a well-thumbed Bible lay on a table by him.

Nancy was almost frightened by the terrible change in him. She knew his mind was not clear and that the brain was weakening as rapidly as the body. He recognized her at once, and made a faint effort to rise; but she sat down beside him, taking one of his hands in hers.

"You know me, don't you, Dick?"

"It's Miss Nancy," with a feeble smile.

Over Dick's poor clouded brain there crept a vague pang. He hardly grasped the idea of her engagement, but he felt that something was wrong. She patted his hand gently.

"Dick, do you forgive me?"

For an instant the vacant look left his face, and he was the Dick of old times.

"You must not reproach yourself, Miss Nancy. It was my own fault," with a gasp. "I'm proud to love"—his eyes closed and his head drooped; then, with a faint smile, he went on: "It'll be in the papers—'Richard Chivick, aged twenty-two years.'" He lay back on his pillows, perfectly exhausted.

Nancy knelt beside him. "Dick, I must go now," in a voice that shook. "Say good-bye."

The loyal blue eyes opened. "Good-bye, Miss Nancy," he said slowly, lovingly.

She leaned down and kissed him—then softly went away.

CHAPTER XII.

RITTENHOUSE TRIUMPHANT.

ONE bright day in early June the express train from Baltimore carried among its passengers the neat little gray-robed figure of Nancy Jackson. She had spent two weeks with the Latrobe family in their beautiful house—been petted, *fêted* and made much of—in fact, treated as only the promised wife of a beloved son could be. When sweet, motherly Mrs. Latrobe bade her welcome to their home, and softly called her "daughter," Nancy's whole heart went out to her; and when Berne greeted her so cordially she felt what a perfect home this was that her lover was giving her. Had she been everything which she was not—old, ugly, ill-natured, or a fool—Mrs. Latrobe would have received her in the same kind way. She would have given a

hospitable welcome to any girl her son had chosen, believing her worthy, having won his love. Not so her daughter—sisters are never submissive to a brother's matrimonial mistakes; but Nancy had won her way into all their hearts before she had been with them a day. Besides, she had met them casually at Berkeley the summer before, when Furness and she had been so much together, and they liked her even then. So the two weeks in Baltimore flew to their end—all sorts of pleasures adding feathers to their wings. And now Nancy had waved a last good-bye to the group in the station, and was well started on the road to Berkeley. As the train whizzed along her thoughts wandered back to the journey she had taken over that road six months before. Then she had wondered if she would return the same girl; now she felt how changed she was—older, years older than when she started out—worldly now and wicked; for was she not engaged to one man and in love with another? But stop: which did she really love? That was the ever-

recurring question, answered first this way and then that. If such sentiment could exist only in the presence of respect and admiration, then she must love Latrobe; but if the feeling that made her heart beat and her pulses throb—that brought the color flying in loud proclamation to her cheeks—that robbed her of sleep and gave her happiness only in the presence of its idol,—then, certainly, she loved Rahl Rittenhouse. She had no respect for him and no admiration—in fact, his numerous weaknesses rather excited her contempt, which sometimes reached such a height that she was made to wonder whether she had really given her heart to such a man, or if it was only pride at the conquest of so noted an individual. Her thoughts were still intent on this perplexing theme when the train stopped, and a loud "Nancy! Nancy!" shouted by a lusty pair of lungs, roused the drowsy passengers to the exertion of a smile, as a freckled face and red head thrust themselves in the car door. In a moment the respective owners of the name and

the voice were out on the platform folded in each others' arms. Several amused spectators peered from the car windows, wondering with lazy interest why such a pretty, stylish girl should be so overcome with joy at meeting a dirty little boy, and why the urchin, laughing and sobbing, should cling with his grimy hands to the neat dress. Then, as the train moved out, they could just hear the hysterical little voice crying, "Nancy, promise, promise you'll never leave me again."

The relentless engine had carried them too far on their road for them to see the girl lay her wet cheek lovingly on the bright head, or to hear the sweet voice say, soothingly, "Never again, Jack, never again."

But emotion all vanished when Darnit was introduced. He had been Nancy's quiet, well-mannered traveling companion, though he howled dismally when she bore him away from the palatable rugs in his Baltimore home, where, by means of that judicious diet, his ears had some-

how lost their vast proportions and his frail little body had forgotten to quiver at every ominous sound. Jack and he became fast friends from the first moment of meeting; a reciprocal admiration of each other's homeliness seemed to unite them in the strong bonds of sympathy.

Next to Jack, Aunt Sallie evinced the greatest delight at the traveler's return.

"De cart hab been before de hoss, Miss Nancy, eber since you done lef' des parts; but now ——," and the old black face beamed expressively.

Yes, indeed, everything returned to its accustomed routine as if by magic, and after a few days of the old monotony Nancy almost stopped to wonder whether she had ever been away. The hotel was gradually filling with summer visitors, for it was now late in June, and in a short while merry music would waken the echoes in the dreary ballroom, while gay dancers dispelled all the winter's gloom.

One evening Nancy was busy in the kitchen pouring balm into Jack's wounds received in an

attack upon a colony of wasps. He had been playing in the grove with Darnit, when suddenly he measured his length on a nest. The family all being at home, enjoying their evening meal, resented this destruction of their earthly Paradise with biting vehemence and stinging reproach.

Jack howled with pain as he flew to Nancy. The worst was over; but he was still warmly extemporizing on wasps in general in language certainly imported from town, when George Washington Tubbs, the butler, boss and bottle-washer of the Jackson household, entered the kitchen to announce "a gem'man to see Miss Nancy." Her face flushed and Jack clapped his hands with delight.

"Nancy, it must be Furnie."

"No, miss, it ain't Mars. Latrobe; dis am a dark gem'man, and he come by de evenin' stage."

"Tell him I'll be there in a minute, Tubbs."

"But, Nancy," whined Jack, with all a boy's selfishness, "tell him you can't see him, 'cause I'm stung, and you're goin' to read to me."

"I'll do nothing of the kind, Jack. I've done everything I can to make you comfortable. Now kiss me good-night," and she left him, sulkily kicking the toe of his well-worn boot against the stove.

Slowly she walked down the hall, fastening up some stray locks of her dishevelled hair as she went. Arriving at the parlor door she stopped, with her head meditatively inclined to one side—looked for an instant at the sparkling diamond on her third finger, drew it off and dropped it hastily in her pocket. Next she very carefully pushed the heavy gold bangle up her arm to a safe hiding place beneath her sleeve, there to conceal its enameled "Mizpah." Then, at last, she opened the door and walked in.

Rahl—for, of course, it was for his sake all these elaborate preparations were made—stood, with his back turned, absently drumming on the window. Nancy hesitated a moment, trying to still her beating heart before she said, quietly, "Well, you are come, Mr. Rittenhouse."

"Nancy, darling!" he cried, passionately, as he turned at the sound of her voice. "Oh, it has been such torture to wait till you said I might come."

His wild happiness at seeing her again, the flashing of his dark eyes and his set teeth, showing his strong effort at self-control, made Nancy's brain reel and her heart throb; yet when he moved as though to catch her to him, she stepped back haughtily and waved him off. "You forget yourself, Mr. Rittenhouse."

"Listen," speaking hoarsely. "I have come down here to ask you to marry me, and to tell you that I shall go mad if you don't; I believe now I am possessed. I tried from the first to put you out of my thoughts. You know how I have succeeded. I'm not the man to do things by halves, and I love you more than life."

"Lor', Nancy, what a dude!" It was Jack's disagreeable voice proceeding from Jack's grinning mouth. This was his timely revenge.

Rahl turned—all the intensity of his love changed into anger at this rude interruption.

"You little devil!" he cried, his face purple and his clenched hand raised.

Nancy thought she had never seen anything so terrible as this man's rage; while poor little Jack stood rooted to the spot, with his petrified head in the door. In an instant Rahl was himself again, and had apologized to Nancy; but during that brief pause Jack had become his mortal enemy.

"Jack," Nancy said, sternly, "go to your room." Meekly and obediently the head vanished. "Come, Mr. Rittenhouse, let us go out on the porch," she added.

"No, we may be intruded upon even there. Will you walk in the grove?"

It was dark and chilly, but Nancy was strangely excited, and allowed him to draw her arm through his and lead her out.

"Now, Nancy, I want your answer. Will you be my wife?"

For a few moments she could not speak—hardly collect the many different thoughts surg-

ing through her brain. His wife! Mrs. Rahl Rittenhouse! a queen in society and the idol of the man she believed she loved. Then ensued a sharp moral struggle between heart and conscience; but now as ever the latter succumbed to to the former's "I love him." Latrobe, faith, honor, even, were swept away by the overpowering emotion that mastered her, and before conscience had time to warn her with a doubt, she had answered impulsively, "Yes."

In the twilight she looked at her companion, surprised by his calmness after the scene they had just passed through. There was an unusual gleam in his eyes and a queer look on his face she could not comprehend. By that one word she had put an end to the terrible jealousy that had racked him—to the awful strain of doubt he had endured, and the reaction made his passionate heart angry for the moment at this girl, as the cause of all his suffering; but his love, the strongest feeling of this man's weak nature, asserted itself, and, turning towards her, he once

more made as though to take her in his arms. Involuntarily she drew back, and, as her hand dropped to her side, something gleaming on her wrist caught Rahl's eye.

"Who gave you that?" he demanded, jealously, catching hold of it.

"A friend," she answered, softly.

Her lips quivered as she thought how dear a friend he was, indeed, who had given it to her.

Rahl was mollified; his face softened as kindly and gently he leaned down to kiss her.

"No," cried Nancy, petulantly, "you shan't kiss me—you shan't even take my hand!"

This vehemence surprised them both—herself, perhaps, more than her companion—*he* was accustomed to her vagaries. How could she let him touch her with that prayer on her arm?

Rittenhouse did not question this new mood—he rather admired it; so, together as they had come out, they silently returned to the old house.

Then on the porch Nancy faced him. "You can't come in," she said, with a mournful tone in

her voice, "and you mustn't let any one know what has passed between us till ——, well, till I tell you to."

"Shan't I speak to your father?" in rather a relieved key.

"No!" sharply; then, repenting her coldness, she laid her hand on his arm: "You must trust me; you must believe all I do is right." Here she laughed a little. "I think you must have frightened me to-night with your dreadful temper; but see," interrupting the unpleasant allusion, "how bright the moon is."

In it's soft light on the old vine-clad porch Nancy looked almost beautiful. "Like an angel," thought the man beside her, standing subdued and quiet.

"Now, good-night," the sweet voice went on. "Jack will be waiting for me; he never sleeps till I come. There, you may take my hand, and—yes," smiling, as he looked at her in hesitation, "you may kiss it."

But, as he leaned over, the heavy bangle slipped down the white arm as though to shield

the hand from profanation. Something of that idea must have flashed into Nancy's mind; for before her lover could avail himself of the gracious permission she snatched her hand away and disappeared. Up-stairs she flew into Jack's room only to find that young man sound asleep, and snoring, on his little cot. Two big tears dropped on the red head as she softly kissed him good-night.

Safe in her own room Nancy sobbed as though her heart would break. Of course she was happy, but, oh, so sorry for poor Furness, though, on the whole, he was well rid of such a girl. It would never do to write to him; she must wait until he comes. For one thing she felt glad—that she had not allowed Rahl to kiss her while she was bound to him, and Rahl should not until Furness unlocked that bracelet and took it from her arm. He had always been so kind and trusting; while she ——. Could he ever forgive her? She wished Rittenhouse had never come to Berkeley to make her so miserable; and yet, of course, she loved him.

CHAPTER XIII.

RITTENHOUSE SQUARED.

AND now ensued days that Rahl afterwards looked back upon as the happiest of his life. A man engaged is not generally so joyful as a young lady. He looks at it from a more business-like point of view, and knows there is always the great danger that his betrothed may change her mind. The stronger his love, the greater his fear; so he redoubles his attentions, and his chief pleasure is in looking forward to his marriage. When that event transpires he very often rests from his exertions and fails in those little acts of courtesy so dear to every feminine heart. It is the very incompleteness of a lover's joy that makes it so keen.

Rahl felt he did not have any of the privileges that were his due. He was not permitted to

speak of his engagement in the presence of a third party; he had never been allowed another kiss, or even caress; and last, but not least by any means, he was never to address her except as "Miss Nancy." There was a curious restraint about her—a restless excitement—and if sometimes a tender word or a soft glance escaped her it seemed to be almost against her will.

One pretty June night, as they sat on the porch together, she startled him by suddenly bursting into tears.

"Why, darling," he said, gently, not daring to touch her, "tell me what it is?"

"Yes, I must tell you ——;" but here she stopped.

"Well, dear?"

"I haven't acted rightly to some one ——;" then, with one of her impulsive changes of mood, she added, "but it will all come right. Let us go over to the hotel; I want to see Miss Calwell." And there for the rest of that evening she was the gayest of them all, laughing and chatting

with the girls and men as though no care oppressed her. But she was very far from being happy. How could she be happy when she knew —oh, so well—the wrong she was doing?

There was a fascination about Rahl Rittenhouse almost irresistible to her, and yet she knew that Furness Latrobe was by far the better man. Each day she asked herself the question which should she take? and each day the desire to break with Latrobe increased, but something unaccountable held her back. Her letters to him grew shorter, colder and at longer intervals; but as his business had been so pressing that any visits to Berkeley were impossible, he laid all the blame to that. "Little girl," he wrote in one of his letters, "I am coming the 1st of July to spend a whole week, and then you can give me a good scolding."

And in the meantime Rahl read and talked, or rambled over the country with his ladylove, finding the sunny June days flying only too fast. Sometimes they drove over the mountains, and at others scoured the valleys on horseback.

Jack certainly was a trial, and many a time Rahl felt he could stand him no longer; for Jack, being his sworn enemy, never lost an opportunity of proving it disagreeably. Often Nancy even grew provoked, but one angry word from Rahl was enough to make her take up the cudgels in her brother's defence. He fairly dogged their footsteps; no place seemed too remote, no moment too inopportune for the obstinate bullet-shaped head to appear, with some needless demand upon his sister.

One day she was sitting with Rahl on the side of the mountain which rises abruptly from the grove. He was reading "Lucile," while Nancy worked on some dainty bit of lace. He dropped the book a minute to watch her busy fingers.

"I think," he said, dreamily, "Lucile was a little hard on the duke; women are so apt to be cruel to the men who love them."

It was just the place for romance; the green trees all around completely screening them from any curious passers-by, the clear, sweet mountain

air, and near them the birds twittering in the glad sunshine.

"Nancy!" called Jack's noisy voice, jarring on the quiet scene, as his still more inharmonious self appeared to view. "Nancy, I've got a hole in my trousers. You must mend it at once't. Here's the darnin' cotton."

Rahl thought it had an appropriate name, and he could not quite conceal his frown as Nancy looked at him.

"What would you do without me, Jack?" she asked, beginning to mend the hole.

There was a pleased smile on his wicked little face.

"I knowed you was here," he said, complacently. "I always know where you are," looking at Rahl, who felt he could cheerfully have pushed him down the mountain. "And he was readin' poetry to you—wasn't he, Darnit?" to that little wretch, his most constant companion.

"Jack, you were listening, were you?"

"I don't do that," indignantly; "but I'm sure

I couldn't help hearing as I got near," playfully kicking dust over Rahl's low shoes.

"Stop that!" he said, haughtily.

Nancy looked up from her sewing. "Jack, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Go right home."

But this he flatly refused to do, and neither threats nor bribes could move him from the stone on which he settled himself. How Rahl's fingers itched to be on him; and finally he and Nancy were obliged to make the move.

Misgivings began to grow in Nancy's heart as she saw their ever-increasing dislike for one another. What would the future be without her beloved Jack? "They will certainly become fond of each other in time," she thought. But now the crisis came.

Ten days had passed since Rahl's arrival—to-night Latrobe was to come. Not until the stage thundered in and the hotel people crowded out on the porch to inspect the new-comers—not until that last moment—did Nancy's heart stand

still, while an awful dread stole over her, making her sick and faint with its sudden intensity. She remained a little in the background of the throng, with Miss Calwell and Rahl, but Furness caught sight of her at once. Eagerly he grasped her extended hand, and impulsively bent towards her face.

"For Heaven's sake, don't kiss me!" she whispered, nervously.

For a second he was taken back. "Oh, that's so!" he said, good naturedly. "I was forgetting the people. I will go now and get some of this dust off."

Though Rahl had not heard the whisper, he had noted Latrobe's quick gesture, and he turned to Nancy angrily: "What did he mean?"

She was frightened—terrible visions of a bloody duel shot before her eyes. He must be appeased at all hazards. She slipped her hand in his arm.

"Don't be so cross. Suppose we go in and waltz."

"Nancy," he said, decidedly, "I must have an

answer. If you don't tell me, I shall ask Latrobe himself. What did he mean? Do you let him, or any other man, kiss you?"

There was no evading the question, so she must be as firm as he.

"Have you any confidence at all in me, Mr. Rittenhouse?" He hesitated. "For, "she went on, "if you have none we may as well break with each other now. Without trust, you know, there can be no real love."

"Nancy," he exclaimed, in a low tone of deep feeling, "have a little mercy on me."

Instantly she followed up the advantage his submission gave her.

"In a few minutes Mr. Latrobe will come for me, and I must go. To-morrow morning he may be with me—perhaps in the afternoon, too—but at five o'clock I will ride with you. You understand this is necessary, and you must have confidence in me."

Of course, Rahl acquiesced.

Nancy fully intended now to break her engage-

ment with Furness; but that night as she lay on her little bed, trying to get to sleep, there was a wild tumult going on in her brain. "I won't think," she said to herself. "I'll do as I please;" and she tried to still the unwelcome reproaches. "I love Rahl, and I've a right to love whomever I please. Poor Furness! Well, it was his own fault. Oh, if I could only waken up to find it all a dream!" But it was too great a reality to be put aside; and when at last she fell into an uneasy sleep, it was only a very short time before the bright sunlight streaming into her room brought the consciousness of another day. Her mind was not a whit more composed, for the thought of how sadly the evening would come for Furness sent a curious little thrill of pain through her heart and made her head ache with its sharpness. "I'll tell him this afternoon," she said; "the later the better."

After breakfast she delayed round the house, playing with the children, talking with sick Mrs. Jackson, and helping Aunt Sallie with the pud-

ding for dinner, thereby almost ruining the freshness of her new pink muslin; but at noon she took her work and went across to that part of the grove where her own particular set of friends were sitting beside the little stream of spring water that runs through the hotel grounds. Both sides of the brook are walled up with rough stones, and, being bridged over by a rustic construction, it adds very much to the beauty of the place.

Two or three girls, with as many men, were grouped together under the trees, evidently having a gay, good time.

"What makes you so late this morning?" asked one of them, as Nancy sat down in a chair dangerously near the run.

Mr. Latrobe placed his chair by hers.

"I have been waiting impatiently for you," he said, in a perplexed tone, for he saw there was some change in her which he could not understand.

"Mr. Rittenhouse has been looking for you

everywhere," said Miss Calwell, in a very knowing way; "and here he comes now."

Something very like a suspicion flashed into Latrobe's head; just as quickly he banished it.

"Good-morning, Miss Nancy," Rahl said, in his easy manner, as he put a chair on the other side of her. He seemed moody and vexed with things in general, taking no part in the lively conversation to which Nancy added a very forced share.

"Nan., you're too near that edge. You'll have a swim, if you don't watch out," warned Miss Calwell.

"It would be more of a wade than a swim," Nancy replied, glancing down at the shallow water two or three feet below them.

"Mr. Rittenhouse, you had better move, too."

He was on the very edge, but he paid no heed to the kindly warning; and, now, to his further annoyance, a ball suddenly struck him on the shoulder. He tossed it back, when in a moment more the same performance was repeated.

"You shan't have it again," he called.

"Give me that ball!" commanded Jack, appearing from behind an adjacent tree.

Rahl was at a loss to know exactly what to do; he did not wish to offend Nancy, and yet he certainly did not intend to lower himself by obeying Jack's insolent order. He saw they were all watching him in amusement, so he tossed it lightly across the stream. There was no reason why Jack should not cross the little bridge and get it, but he simply chose to be angry. Nancy said nothing. She knew that public reproof only hardened him, and she was so nervously afraid of a quarrel that she jumped up, crossed the bridge, and in an instant tossed the ball to Jack. It was a kind little action, done too quickly for any one else to have taken her place.

"You certainly spoil that boy, Nan.," remarked Miss Calwell.

Rahl heartily concurred in this opinion. But Jack's anger was evidently not over yet, so he tried new tactics.

"Come, Nancy," pulling her; "it's dinner time, and I'm hungry. Come on!"

"I am not going, Jack; so you needn't worry me," she returned, not having the remotest idea of allowing him to impose on her.

"Miss Jackson, may I speak to you a moment?" asked a lady, coming near them.

Nancy rose immediately to go to her, and Jack seated himself in her chair. Latrobe was talking to one of the girls, so for a moment no one noticed him.

He turned to Rahl. "You're a coward," he said, impertinently.

With a great effort Rahl controlled his temper; and now Jack began to wriggle the back of his chair.

"Stop!" cried Rahl, angrily.

Jack gave the chair a jerk that sent it flying into the brook, while Rahl just rose in time to save himself from falling likewise.

"You little devil!" he exclaimed, as, without thinking, he struck the boy. It was a harder blow than he intended, and, like a log, Jack fell in the stream, striking his head on the rocks.

For a minute Rahl was too horrified to move; but in that time Latrobe had jumped in, and, lifting poor little unconscious Jack gently in his strong arms, laid him on the grass. In vain they tried to bring him to, while Nancy, pale as death, could only wring her hands and moan piteously.

"We had better take him home," Latrobe said, after they had worked with him a while; "then I'll go for the doctor."

Nancy could hardly drag her trembling limbs along, as she followed Latrobe and his precious burden.

The old country doctor had been instantly summoned by Rahl. His treatment was more successful than theirs, and he assured them that a few hours' rest would make Jack almost himself again.

As Nancy sat beside him that afternoon diligently wafting a large palm-leaf fan, she did a great deal of thinking. The morning's shock had scattered all her silly fancies about Rahl Rittenhouse, and it seemed to her she could see him now in his true light. It was not for the

fatal accident she blamed him, though it did seem to her that Furness would never have struck such a little boy; but it seemed to show her how utterly cold he was—how narrow, and how incapable of making her perfectly happy. "And I believed I loved him," she thought. "I'll ride with him this afternoon and tell him then." So she sent a little note, in answer to his, in which he expressed his contrition, and inquired about the ride.

At five o'clock Nancy was all ready to mount her fiery little blue-grass steed. Though the dark-green habit was shabby, it fitted her well, showing to the best advantage the pretty figure, and setting off the fresh face wonderfully. Her jaunty hat had been a little piece of Philadelphia extravagance, and was much too fine for the dress. Rahl was poorly mounted on an old livery horse, in miserable comparison to Nancy's small thorough-bred. He had been considerably alarmed by the result of his recent act of prowess, and was not prepared for her kindly greeting.

He concluded that she was taking the sensible view of the matter, so he referred to it lightly.

"I am glad Jack is not more seriously hurt."

"He will soon be all right again," she answered, as they rode along.

They were both rather quiet, but, as the heat was very oppressive, this was only natural. After the sun set it grew cooler, and soon Nancy broke the fitful silence. "We had better turn now. It will be dark shortly, and it isn't proper ——."

He laughed. "What, not with your future husband?" he asked, in an amused tone.

This broke the ice.

"There is something I want to tell you," she began. "You remember that night on the porch, when I began to cry?"

"Yes, I remember; you had something to tell me then."

"Mr. Rittenhouse, you ought to know. There is some one I have allowed to love me when it was not right. Could you forgive a girl for doing that?"

"Some country bumpkin, I suppose," his suspicions entirely at rest. "I don't mind, you know, so I'm not the man."

"If I were to tell you —— that ——," stopping as she saw his angry frown.

"What do you want to tell me?" he demanded, fiercely. "Have you been trifling with me?" coming so near that their horses touched.

"Mr. Rittenhouse," she began again, nervously, "I find I do not love ——," here she stopped; every moment she was getting more frightened.

"Is it Latrobe? I could kill him!" savagely.

"I haven't treated you ——," another break. Oh, if she could only get away from him—his anger was terrible. She touched her horse; but Rahl saw her design, and made a great effort to control himself.

"Listen to me," he said, in a hoarse voice, laying hold of her bridle.

Nancy lost her head completely; she grew frantic to escape. Raising her little whip she gave him a stinging, nasty blow on the hand.

Involuntarily he let go the reins, and, like a flash, she shot ahead. She heard him galloping in pursuit; heard him shout to her, but she paid no heed. Soon the cool air began to have its effect on her nerves; she slackened her pace, being compelled to go very slowly through a drove of cows, and in a few minutes Rahl joined her. He had now completely conquered his passion.

"You needn't be afraid of me," he said, bitterly; "I won't reproach you."

Nancy began to see how foolishly—how cruelly she had behaved.

"I haven't acted rightly," she exclaimed.

"You have acted very well," sarcastically.

"If I could only have it to go over again, how very different I should be."

"Don't distress yourself"—he was the old, indifferent man of the world she had first met. "A woman can't help being false—men should expect it."

This stung Nancy. "And how did you treat me last winter?"

"Oh, then you were taking revenge," lazily. "I might have guessed as much. "Well, you came very near succeeding."

"It wasn't revenge," cried Nancy, bitterly, repenting her hasty speech. "Call me thoughtless or foolish, or anything but malicious. Oh, Rahl, tell me you don't believe that!"

She put her hand on his arm, and looked up in his face beseechingly. It was the hardest moment of that man's life, I think.

"We will say no more about it, if you please," he answered, coldly. "I have received my *congé;* I shall take it with a good grace."

Latrobe was waiting for her on the porch when they rode up. Mr. Rittenhouse then said "good-evening" very politely, thanked her for the pleasant ride, and withdrew.

If ever there was a miserable girl in this world it was Nancy that night. She excused herself early from Latrobe, to kneel for hours by her little attic window. Long-stifled conscience gave her no rest—now every wrong action of the last

few months rose before her with awful vividness. Hers was a nature of extremes—she enjoyed or suffered with her whole soul, and now it seemed to her as though her sin were black beyond redemption. What could she do to show her penitence?—be true to Furness? Then for the first time the thought struck her—ought she to tell him? "Yes, I will," she cried, "I'll tell him to-morrow morning."

It must have been midnight, for she heard the rumble of the stage-coach starting for the two o'clock train, and leaning out she saw beside the driver, in the bright moonlight, a figure she thought she knew. She watched him till they turned the corner, and then she folded her hands and prayed.

CHAPTER XIV.

JACK AS A CHAPERON.

NEXT morning Nancy arrayed herself in the freshest of dresses, very much in the same spirit that a suicide dons his Sunday clothes. According to the previous night's appointment Latrobe appeared at the gate precisely at nine o'clock. There was a perplexed look on his usually bright face, as he puffed impatiently at his fragrant Havana. Nancy answered his greeting nervously, her voice trembling and her eyes on the ground.

"There is something I would like you to hear. Mr. Rittenhouse has gone." Though this was not the important communication, yet she paused, as if expecting some remark. None came, so she continued. "I thought I was in love with him, so when he came here to ask me to marry him, I said, 'yes.'"

Latrobe started; then the half-smoked cigar was flung far out on the grass.

"I meant to tell you all the time, but I waited; and, then, I didn't care for him a bit, and now he is gone. I hope you are not very angry." She raised her eyes to his face; it was stern and very, very grave. Without a moment's thought she took off her engagement ring, thrust it in his hand, and walked slowly in the house. If she expected him to call her back she was mistaken; for he neither moved nor spoke.

Once in her room Nancy threw herself on the bed in a storm of tears. Now she had lost this noble fellow she realized how completely he had won her love. All that morning she lay there sobbing her heart out, or walked the floor in a state of frenzy.

It chanced as she was thus going to and fro in the little room she unintentionally glanced from the open window, and out in the grove, under the trees, sat Furness Latrobe with—Nancy could scarcely believe her eyes—a young lady. "Well,"

she muttered, clenching her hands. "I never did see such audacity. He might at least have shown enough consideration for my feelings to keep away from the house. He hasn't even turned his back to it," with a sob, "but lets the girl do that." Then, savagely, "I wonder who she is. Of course, she's pretty, or he wouldn't be looking so sweetly at her. Oh, if she'd only turn her head. Perhaps it's his Baltimore friend—the heiress. I know—I'll send Jack to see if it is."

Being near the hour for their mid-day meal, Jack was within call, and came at once.

"Little brother," she said, while he gazed wonderingly at the red eyes and swollen face, "sister wants to know who Furnie is talking to out in the grove."

Jack's arms were round her neck in rough sympathy; for his precocious mind had caught at the cause of his sister's trouble. Then he was off willingly to do her bidding. Nancy watched him from the fatal window, and saw—again she doubted her sight—but no, she certainly saw

Jack march straight up to Furness, and with his hand confidently resting on the latter's knee, make some remark which caused Latrobe to laugh till the hearty sound reached her ears way off there by the casement; then he took something from his Norfolk jacket and presented it to Jack. Besides all this she saw the girl offer him candy, and, what was more, the traitor took a plentiful supply.

"Jack," gasped Nancy, as soon as he appeared, "what have you done?"

"Ain't done nothin' 'cept ask that girl's name, and I'm blessed if he told me."

Jack scratched his head in amazement at his own stupidity.

"Well," Nancy said, impatiently, shaking him by the arm, "what did he give you?"

"Nothin'."

"Jack, that's a story. I saw the lady hand you some candy, and he gave you something else." She hoped it was a note and, perhaps, her ring.

There was a wicked gleam in Jack's eye, as he

produced a cigar. He bit the end like an old experienced smoker before he continued: "He said you was to be ready to go with him this afternoon, a little after five, to see the sunset from the mountain."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, doubtfully. Although not pardon, it was reprieve; but such an ambiguous message might mean anything. It probably meant that Furness intended to tell her definitely now that all was over between them, or possibly he would magnanimously offer to renew the engagement, or he might—and here Nancy's face brightened—he might mean to tell her that he loved her enough to forgive everything.

All the afternoon she sat in her cool room, bathing her eyes, till by the hour named there was not even a telltale flush to hint of the tempestuous morning.

At quarter past five precisely Nancy, arrayed in her best white muslin and her Sunday hat, with its soft mulle and drooping feathers, stepped out on the porch. with an air of "now or never."

"Why, Nancy, you've got on all your Sunday fixin's," quoth Jack.

He had been previously bidden to stay at home; but as he had about as much respect for orders as for all things else material, Latrobe was immediately informed, in a decided tone, that he was to be one of the party.

"But, Jack," Furnace said, good-naturedly, "you know two are company and three are not."

"Oh, you needn't feel badly about that; we won't mind your goin' with us this once, will we, Nancy?"

Of course, they laughed, and, of course, Jack had his way.

First came the steep climb up from the grove; a short walk on the road; then another sharp climb before they struck the path that wound up to the top. The silence was almost unbroken. How Nancy wished Jack would talk; but he, probably feeling it was expected of him, kept quiet. At last they arrived on the open level space on which the tower was built. Originally

it had been erected as a speculation, and people were required to pay for the view from its roof; but this had long since failed or suffered to fall into disuse, so it now stood solitary and deserted. The roof was fenced round with a rude circular bench and railing. As they emerged upon it, panting and breathless, the sun was just setting amid masses of rosy-tinted clouds, throwing a beautiful golden light over the country. The valley stretched below them for miles, rising and falling, bordered with the distant blue mountains. They could just see the village of Berkeley, very small, and far away, beneath them.

The three sat down on the rickety bench covered with the autographs of many pilgrims, and Jack at once took out his knife preparatory to adding his own distinguished name to the register. This was more than Latrobe had bargained for.

"Jack," he said, resolutely, "having enjoyed your society to the fill, we find that our health requires your absence for the brief space of ten minutes, so we will excuse your retirement to the first floor."

"But I ain't goin'," with one hand on his bandaged head and a look of pain calculated to evoke indulgence.

"Jack, you bear pain like a man, and, as one man speaking to another, I ask you politely to step below."

Either the determined tone or the little compliment had the desired effect on Jack.

"Latrobe, you're a square fellow, and I'll go," he said, in a "grown-up" tone, and left them.

As he vanished all Nancy's nervousness returned. She sat twisting and untwisting the ribbons on her dress, till at last the silence became unbearable.

"Did you ever," she inquired anxiously, with a little catch in her voice, "Did you ever see such a beautiful sky?"

"Nancy," he said, gravely, "I didn't come up here to talk about the landscape, but to ask my little girl why she was so hasty in throwing off her ring? and if it was because she found in my case, as in Rittenhouse's, that she had made a mistake?"

"No! no!" cried Nancy; "it wasn't that. I thought you would want it back because I had broken my faith."

The quivering lips and drooping figure were too much for Latrobe. He touched her gently.

"If you have made no mistake, sweetheart, let me put it on again."

"Not till you hear me—not till I hear *you* say you forgive me."

"There is nothing I care to hear, little one; and I could almost wish your misdeeds were greater, that I might have more to forgive. Now give me your hand, and let me put on the ring that is never to come off again."

The tears rolling down Nancy's cheeks recklessly spotted the Sunday dress.

"Oh, you are so good," she murmured, "and," but the the rest of her opinion was sobbed out in her lover's arms. Very soon afterwards came the smiles, as Latrobe, in a tone of great authority, proceeded to make their plans for the future.

"We will be married," he said, "in early Octo-

ber, down in that pretty little country church; we will travel for a month or so before settling down in stiff old Baltimore. There, in that town, so unlike giddy, bustling Philadelphia, you will have no opportunity to display your talent for flirting. There, under my strict surveillance, you ——;" he stopped, for there was an admonitory look in the gray eyes betokening a speedy return of the past shower. "Never mind, sweetheart; I didn't mean to tease you. Let's change the subject. Oh, by the way, did our friend Chivick recover his usual robust health? You never furnished me with any reports."

"He is dead," she answered simply, her voice very low. "Poor little chap!" In a spirit of unconscious reverence Latrobe bared his head. Presently Nancy continued: "I am afraid he liked me very much, and sometimes I even feel as though I am to blame for all his suffering, because at first I did try to make him like me, Furness."

"Ain't them ten minutes up yet?" came a voice

from below. No answer. Jack patiently returned to the elaborate carving of his euphonious name. But there is a limit to everything, particularly Jack's patience. Five minutes had scarcely dragged themselves along when he raised his voice once more, this time in indignation: "See here!" he shouted, "the sun sat most an hour ago." Even this respectful recognition of Nancy's superior wisdom, in teaching that nothing but hen's "set," failed to elicit a response, so Jack decided to take matters in his own hands. He mounted the steps determinedly, but he no sooner reached the top than an expression of the most intense disgust overspread his countenance. "Well, I never!" he ejaculated slowly. "You might have done all that foolin' down to the house, without draggin' a fellow all the way up here to wait till you got through."

And this is what he saw: In bold relief against the evening sky, Latrobe leaning back comfortably in the corner seat, his arm around Nancy, whose head rested on the rough tweed coat,

while the breezes took unwonted liberty with her uncovered hair; and the hat—Jack's especial admiration—lay unheeded on the dusty floor, with its glory of tulle and feathers—as Jack graphically expressed it—"butter side down."

"Jack, have a cigar," said Latrobe, sweetly; but Jack had now risen superior to all such artifice.

"Nancy Jackson," he sternly admonished her, "you'll take your death of cold, sitting in this windy place in that there dress."

"That's a fact. What is it, Nancy, about children and fools speaking the truth? I have learned a lesson from your good sense, young man, and no more white dresses unescorted by blanket shawls. Now for the homeward march. Run ahead, my man, and tell the anxious crowd of villagers we are coming."

"No, siree, bob; you don't catch me fooled twice. I'd come back to-morrow and find you, on the side of the mountain, a-huggin' Nancy."

"The rebuke is just, but the language is vulgar.

You should never employ the term "hugging" in the presence of a lady. But there is one question I should like to put to you, Jack—are fires very frequent in this enterprising village?"

"No," briefly.

"I presume you have not told your sister of the one that broke out yesterday afternoon when she was away." Nancy winced at this unintentional allusion to that terrible ride. "Well," Latrobe said, with his hearty laugh, "as I came in for damages, and found the goods uninsured, I'll take the liberty of recounting the little tale, with your permission, Jack." That young gentleman grinned, in huge appreciation of the joke, so Latrobe continued: "I was sitting in the grove, about half-past five, smoking, with a crowd of fellows"—a stress on the masculine distinction, for which he was rewarded with a smile—"when suddenly we were startled by the cry of 'fire!' and half-a-dozen kids rushing in our direction. I caught the little Jenks boy, and he said it was in Tiler's store. We hurried over there only to find

old Tiler on the front steps, hastily donning his linen duster preparatory to running to the fire. We assured him if there was such a thing it must be in his own establishment. Then the whole situation dawned on him, and I wish you could have seen his face; it was rich!" and Latrobe burst into a peal of laughter, well sustained by Jack, till they waked the echoes. "Will you believe me, Nancy? these kids conspired that, while half went in to purchase an extravagant supply of candy, the other half remained outside; and at a given signal—just as the goods were delivered and the cash not returned—they set up this howl of 'fire!' Then, of course, the whole gang skipped. Tiler was furious—said the next time they should pay first; but I settled the bill, in silent admiration of such marvellous strategy. Jack, you have an abnormal head for trade—business trade. Now, I propose you come to live with us in Baltimore where this talent may be cultivated."

In Jack's wild burst of delight and Nancy's smiles Latrobe had his sufficient reward.

That night Nancy stood on the old vine-clad porch, watching her lover's stalwart figure as he crossed the moon-lit road, ever and again turning to wave her a good-night, and into her heart there came such peace and happiness as never left it while this man was beside her, not only to love and cherish, but to make her better and nobler.

CHAPTER XV.

HER WEDDING DAY.

THE summer that succeeded would have been too happy for this earth if there had not been many little things to worry Nancy. She tried—oh, so hard—to be good—not to go to the hotel to dance and flirt with the others; and, indeed, it was a trial for her to give up this mild gayety. She petted and spoiled the children until at last Jack flatly refused to mind any one but Latrobe. For one day in the week at least he was compelled to behave, but he made up for it in the other six. Nancy worked steadily on her trousseau, making her slender purse go far enough to admit of having her wedding dress made in Philadelphia. If you are a Southerner you know what that means. She hardly had time to drive around the country, in September,

to watch the change of the leaves from green to red and yellow; but, as she sat sewing at her little attic window, she could see the great patches of brilliant color up the mountain side. The old stage was crowded, now, on its trips to Sir John's Run, with summer guests hurrying off to their city homes, so by the first of October only a party from Baltimore, for the wedding, were at the hotel, partially opened for their especial use. By that night the last dress was laid in the trunk, and, as of old, Jack locked and strapped it; but refused absolutely to tack on her new name. This night before the wedding was a strange one for Nancy; the old house had been quite transformed with plants and flowers until it looked like some old English home. All the presents had been put in the parlor by tasteful fingers, and soft white curtains draped the windows; the chairs had been collected in the dining-room, in anticipation of the morrow's feast; the children were in bed, and now there remained a few minutes breathing space for the bride-elect before the

serenade from the village band. Her two bridesmaids—Berne Latrobe and Edith Shew—were over at the hotel dancing, in the great gloomy ball-room, to the sound of George Washington Tubbs' fiddle; evidently the delegation of guests from Baltimore were enjoying this little spree.

Mrs. Latrobe was in the sitting-room, having a quiet chat with Captain and Mrs. Jackson, while Aunt Hannah sat up, stiffly, in a straight-backed chair, making a violent effort not to quarrel with her brother-in-law. Nancy and Furness had been talking with them, but now she led him into the parlor to show him the presents.

"For, you know, to-morrow you won't have a chance of seeing them; you will be on exhibition yourself," she said, as they strayed around the room.

"Who sent this work of art?" he exclaimed, putting his foot on a rug of most brilliant hues.

"Old Mrs. Brown, a farmer's wife, way out in the country. She's almost blind, poor thing!"

"Well, I can't say I admire her taste in colors," returned he.

"That must go in the library, or she will be hurt."

"It shall be sacred to Darnit."

"And look at this Furness; isn't it touching? The man who keeps the tin-shop sent it; it's for oysters. You know I remind him of his first wife."

Mr. Latrobe threw himself on a sofa and burst out laughing.

"Who sent that little army of paper-cutters?"

"Now, Furness, don't laugh. You know how awfully poor they all are, and how they must have denied themselves to send them. Paper-cutters are useful."

Somehow these homely gifts touched Nancy much more than her expensive and artistic presents; but Latrobe was determined to see only the funny side of things, so continued: "How graceful those wax-flowers are; to whom are we indebted for them?" looking at a bunch of the stiffest imaginable, covered with the traditional bell-glass case.

"They are for our centre-table."

"What an artistic house we shall have! But, seriously, Nancy, we are a fortunate pair."

She was flitting round the room, changing this and dusting that. Suddenly she deposited before him two big vases, decorated with huge bunches of staring flowers, lavishly finished in gold.

"These, Furness," kneeling beside them, "are for our parlor mantel-piece."

"No, Miss Nancy; that is where I draw the line. If those vases go in our parlor I go out. I hope none of my family sent them; their lives shall answer for it if they did."

She laughed a little, then answered, slowly: "Mrs. Chivick gave them in Dick's name," clasping them tenderly in her arms.

"And what did Rahl send?" asked Furness, looking intently at her.

She smiled. "He didn't send anything."

"Do you wish he had, Nancy?"

"Well, I don't like to be forgotten so soon."

"He remembers you only too well, you may

be sure; it's not forgetfulness. Do those sweet strains falling on my ear mean that the band is here?"

"Yes, they do; and they want some beer."

In a few minutes more the village band to a man were drinking Miss Nancy's health and happiness, in the kitchen. A little later some fireworks were sent up, the leader affirmed; but as no one ever saw them, it is supposed they were a failure. Some tactless persons to this day ask him if he did not confound pyrotechnics with the stars he was seeing just then.

The supposition about Rahl Rittenhouse was correct. To the outward world he is the same; society knows him more than ever as its acknowledged leader; no german is a perfect success, in the sacred precincts south of Market street, unless he leads it—no belle quite happy unless she gets a few words from him. As he grows older he will adhere more strictly to the traditions of his ancestors—be more exclusive than ever—and yet, sometimes instinctively, his steps will turn to

Caterpillar street, and he will find himself by that well-known 2013. There is one subject tacitly forbidden between Mr. Coles and himself. He will never marry; even Mrs. Rittenhouse's clever tactics cannot avail to make him fancy his cousin; and finally, perhaps, at the ripe age of thirty, the wretched Maude, finding the maternal opposition continues, will elope with the equally wretched Mr. Cadams, who will spend the rest of his life lamenting the step he has taken, while his wife settles down into an ordinary commonplace Philadelphia matron.

Nancy's wedding is to take place at the early hour of ten, to enable the young couple to catch a certain train, and by that hour the little church on the hill is crowded. The middle aisle is left for the "ladies and gentlemen;" but the villagers of all ranks, from the well-to-do postmaster down to the shock-headed little barefoot boy, feel entitled to a seat, or standing room, at least, in the side aisles. Outside, crowded round the door, are little children, beside those of a larger growth,

who consider this the best place to get a view; but they are very careful to leave sufficient passage for the b.ide, and not to step on her carpet. The church is bright with autumn branches and greens; and now the village organist begins to perform on the little melodeon. At first Presbyterian hymns, generally of a mournful character, fall from her rather unskilful fingers; but at a given signal from the minister she draws a deep breath and plunges into her *chef-d'œuvre*—"the Wedding March." Several quick ears among the congregation start at the unwonted melody; but now their attention is drawn to a more important matter. Latrobe and his best man, Bob Karrall, take their places in full view; the crowd in the side aisles stand up in a body, and give an honest, hearty stare at the coming procession. First the ushers, with imperturbable faces, move steadily along; next, Berne and Edith, in their muslin dresses; then, with infantile gravity, come little Ken and Virgie, hand-in-hand, wonder and fear mingled in their wide open eyes; last, the bride,

leaning on her father's arm. The rustle of her heavy silk dress is almost the only sound heard, as they slowly walk to the minister. All her pretty color is gone, and her bouquet trembles visibly as they move on. Latrobe steps forward and takes her from her father; then the ceremony proceeds.

At first, as she stands there, the thought strikes her, "Oh, is my dress all right?" and many foreign ideas flit through her mind. How distinctly she sees the pattern of the carpet; but as she makes her solemn vows, better, holier thoughts rise within her. She prays to be forgiven for her trifling; and then Dick comes before her, and her eyes grow dim. Now her mind is fixed on the present and the man beside her.

As they turn from the minister, and Berne throws back her veil, she raises her head proudly for a moment to look into the faces of those in front. He is her husband—this is the beginning of a new life. No fright or pallor now; she walks as easily and naturally as though in her

own home. As she is about to step in the carriage she drops a flower into the hands of a dirty little boy who reminds her of Jack. The fierce anger of this dearly-beloved brother was the one bitter drop in her cup of happiness. Up to the last day—the last hour—until he saw her in her wedding-dress, he had been confident he could persuade her not to do it. He was so sure she would not leave him, that when he found it was hopeless, he shut himself up in his own room, and refused to grace the ceremony with his presence. He actually chopped up the white kids Latrobe had given him and threw them in the fire.

I don't think any one's absence could have been such a blow to Nancy; but at the wedding breakfast he consented to sit by her, even making a very hearty meal, and it was not until the keen edge of his appetite was taken off that he allowed his feelings to get the better of him.

There was a short reception held before the breakfast, during which all took advantage of the

time-honored custom of saluting the bride. Bob Karrall insisted the bridesmaids were not exempt from this tax, and made saucy little black-eyed Berne so indignant that she cried, "If you do I'll slap you." It is a well-ascertained fact that he did kiss her then and there; that she did not slap him, but that they settled their differences on the back porch that very evening.

The breakfast was a grand affair. Aunt Sallie had several assistants in the kitchen, while George Washington Tubbs fairly staggered under his loads.

Under the influence of the good cheer Captain Jackson came out wonderfully, and when he stood up to make his speech quite outdid himself.

After his the speeches grew fast and furious Nancy was very happy until some one alluded to her as Mrs. Latrobe, speaking of how much she would be missed in her mountain home. Then she saw Jack slide under the table, and she could hear loud snorts from the same region. Gently she felt round with her little slippered foot until

she touched him; then she thrust her hand under the table, and unrestrainedly Jack's tears flowed down on her silk dress and dimmed the lustre of her wedding-ring.

But all feasts and fasts, too, must have an end; so, in the midst of the conviviality, Tubbs announced the carriage.

As they drove off a few minutes later, amid a shower of rice and old shoes, Nancy looked back at the group clustered round the gate; but her eyes rested last and longest on a motionless little figure in brand new knickerbockers, standing out in the road, gazing intently at the vanishing vehicle. No fear now of his climbing the mountain for another good-bye kiss. Jack's first great blow has fallen on him, and he bears it in silence and alone.

Nancy's face is a little sad as they pass the post office, but she tries to smile on her humble friends, whose hearty "Three cheers for Miss Nancy!" send the horses galloping up the hill; but when they settle down into a brisk trot she

breaks out in her old impulsive way: "Oh, Furness, help me to be good!"

His answer is strangely earnest: "Please God, little one, we'll both be good."

"Amen!" said Nancy, softly.

606

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